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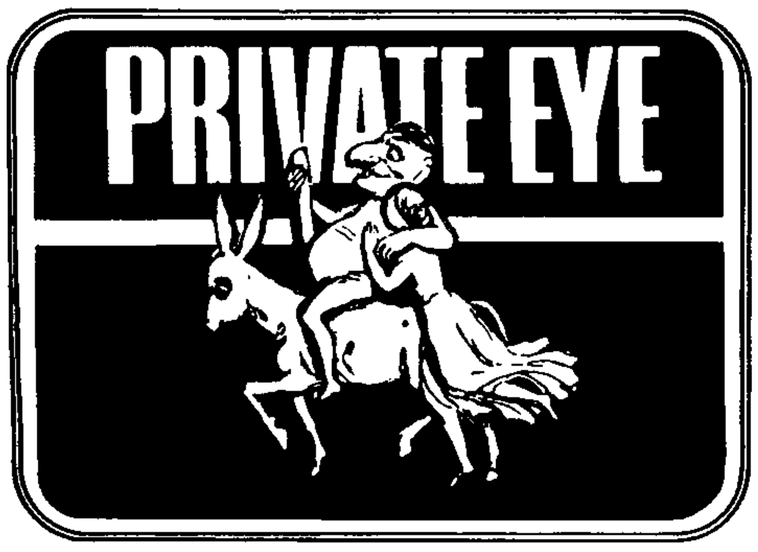

Flu what a scorcher

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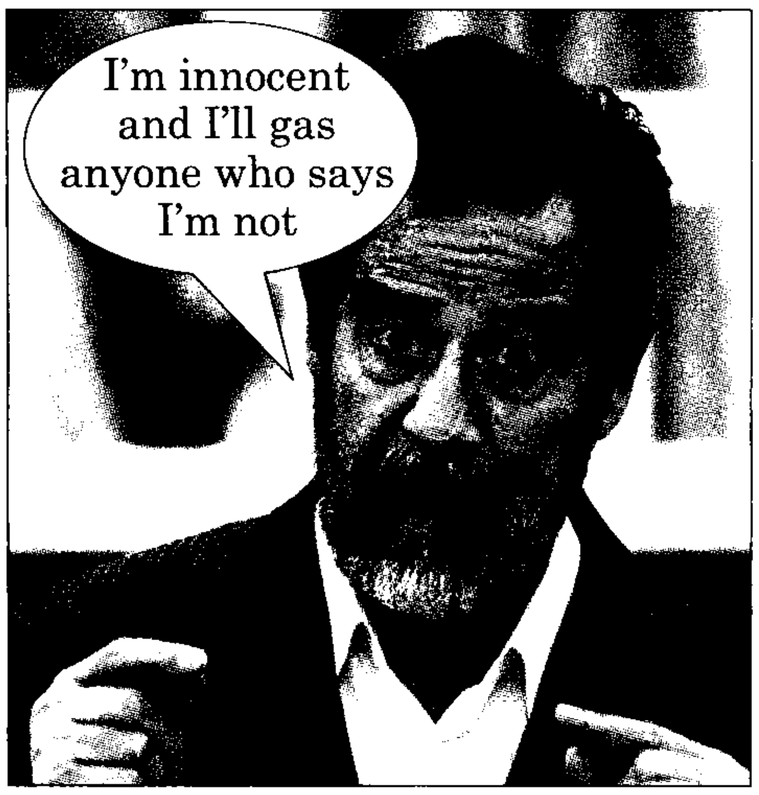
DAVID Cameron says that what he did in his personal life before he became an MP should remain private. An interesting point of view – but not one hitherto shared by the Conservative Party.

Those wishing to become Tory candidates are required to fill in a form stating if anything they have done in their private life "might cause embarrassment to the party". Presumably, this would include taking illegal drugs. No doubt if Cameron becomes leader he will have this question removed for future applicants. But how did he fill in the form himself?

SADDAM'S DEFENCE



WITH perfect timing, early editions of the *Evening Standard* on the day of the second Tory leadership ballot led with the story "Gay Smears and Me, by Tory Hopeful" – the Tory in question being Dr Liam Fox.

Who was behind the smear? "I know for certain that people in the Davis camp were responsible for putting round these false stories," Fox later told the *Mail on Sunday*. His campaign manager John Hayes directly accused David Davis's henchman Derek Conway of planting the story on the *Standard*.

Not so. The "dossier" on which the story was based had been compiled by dirty-tricks wallahs in the Labour Party – who passed it to David Cameron's lieutenants, who in turn gave it to the *Standard*. The Cameroonies were determined to prevent a run-off with Fox, who was feared to have more support in constituency associations.

For all their modernising open-necked cool, the Notting Hill set are still adept at the more traditional arts of politics. The queen bee of the set, Rachel Whetstone, was behind last Wednesday's report by BBC political editor Nick Robinson that the runner-up in Thursday's poll would drop out of the race to allow Cameron a "coronation". Alas, what was intended as a self-fulfilling prophecy had the opposite effect: it infuriated Davis and stiffened his resolve to fight on.

"Shall we join the ladies?"

THE lead signatory on last week's letter to the *Times* supporting David Cameron was Tory grandee Lord Howell, who as David Howell was a minister under Mrs Thatcher.

Quite a coup, eh? Well, not really. Howell is the father-in-law of George Osborne, Cameron's campaign manager.

"KENNETH Clarke is a fraud," Kelvin MacKenzie raged in the *Sun* last Monday. "He poses as a man of the people but, in truth, is quite happy to kill the people."

For the first time in his life, MacFrenzy found himself at one with *Grauniad* readers as he ranted about Clarke's vice-chairmanship of British American Tobacco – "a company that peddles cancer to the masses". Nor was he impressed by Clarke's promise to stand down if elected Tory leader: "Big deal. I would be a sight more impressed had he said that he should never have joined a company that makes money out of death."

No doubt the *Sun*'s proprietor read this with interest. Kelvin had clearly forgotten that between 1989 and 2001 his hero and employer Rupert Murdoch was a director of Philip Morris (now Altria) – the only company in the world which sells more cigarettes than BAT.

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Mr Morgan was the man fundamentally in charge. Mr Morgan is not here, having been cleared by his own inquiry and by his own inquiry I mean the *Mirror*'s inquiry. You may think that is very important."

– Michael Beckman QC, defence counsel in the 'City Slickers' Trial, 19 October.

STEPHEN BYERS was quick to crow over the defeat of the Railtrack shareholders' claim against him, despite the judge's view that his response to allegations of lying to parliament was "little above gibberish".

In a piece modestly titled "Democracy upheld" in the *Guardian* the day after the result, Byers even declared himself pleased that the judge found that "I had not sought to deceive or mislead the court on any issue". (Some may feel it's come to something when a former cabinet minister who still harbours political ambitions considers not having committed perjury something to boast about).

The former transport secretary was also keen to capitalise on the popularity of bringing down Railtrack among *Guardian* readers. This, he said, was the "Tory privatisation" that had paid dividends while under-investing. His intervention had ensured that "track maintenance has been taken away from the Balfour Beattys of this world" so that "the ethos of public service now runs through the very core of Network Rail".

Byers' famously fallible memory obviously failed him again, for there was a time not so long ago when he was on better terms with "the Balfour Beattys of this world". Four months after putting Railtrack into administration, he pushed through the Tube PPP contracts under which maintenance work was handed over, with predictably pisspoor results, to consortia including… Balfour Beatty.

Not only that, but before moving to transport Byers was the Trade Secretary who approved taxpayer guarantees to Balfour Beatty for the construction of the hugely controversial Ilisu dam in Turkey. The project involved such human and environmental damage – government reports on which Byers refused to disclose – that in the face of overwhelming protests Balfour eventually pulled out without taking up Byers' kind offer. Where would democracy be without such statesmen to uphold it?

JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT

July 1997: "New" Labour education white paper abolishes Tory policy of allowing schools to opt out of local authority control.

October 2005: "New" Labour education white paper introduces "pivotal" policy of allowing schools to opt out of local authority control.

"He's being held under the prevention of heroism act"

Street of Shame

THOSE TORY TIPSTERS IN FULL...

"I ALMOST feel sorry for David Cameron, whose campaign to lead the Tory Party daily sinks deeper into irrelevance... If you want my advice, Dave, I'd take the early bath before the early bath takes you." – Simon Heffer, *Daily Mail*, 10 September.

"Kenneth Clarke called on David Cameron yesterday to pull out of the Conservative leadership race and back either himself or David Davis. The former chancellor also risked over-confidence by openly predicting that he would defeat Mr Davis, the shadow home secretary, in the battle to become Tory leader. 'I think I'm going to break this run of always being second,' Mr Clarke said." – *Daily Telegraph*, 26 September.

"Opinion is hardening that David Cameron is too little tested... Ken Clarke has a chance of victory... Yet betting men continue to put their money on David Davis, and they seem right." – Max Hastings, *Guardian*, 29 September.

"One candidate has the strongest support in Parliament and probably in the local associations as well. That is David Davis. He is very likely to come first in the Parliament ballot." – William Rees-Mogg, *Mail on Sunday*, 2 October.

"The final two men to be placed before the full membership are likely to be Mr Davis and Dr Fox... The moderates and modernisers seem set, once more, to be beaten." – Tim Hames, the *Times*, 3 October.

HOW has the *Observer* responded since launching the Does David Cameron Take Drugs? debate after its political correspondent Andrew Rawnsley first put the question to the wannabe Tory leader at the Blackpool conference?

"Cameron has the right to stay silent... but frankness on drugs is better," its editorial declared loftily. "Though we could not give a hoot whether he smoked the odd joint, or even experimented with other recreational drugs as a younger man, it is a pity that Cameron and his team did not seize the opportunity provided by the question to open up a much-needed debate on the subject."

Quite so. But when the *Eye* tried to open up the debate by asking *Observer* editor Roger Alton himself "have you ever taken illegal drugs?" Alton, too, decided a debate was unnecessary and declined to get back to us with an answer.

DOES THE Dirty Digger still think he pulled off quite such a *coup* in poaching Mike Anderson, former managing director of the *Evening Standard*, to run the *Sun* and *News of the Screws*?

A few weeks ago we reported that his temporary successor at the *Standard*, veteran Fleet Street boxwallah Bert Hardy, had started going through the accounts and found what appeared to be a £15m "black hole" (*Eye* 1141). The investigation is now complete – and the shortfall turns out to be £19m.

The main cause for this extraordinary gap between Anderson's projected revenue and the actual revenue is the amount of advertising space that was simply given away. By the end of Anderson's reign, there were some days when *more than half* the advertisements in a 90-page paper were effectively *gratis*.

STILL reeling from the affair of Dilpazier Aslam, the 27-year-old trainee hack who turned out to be a member of the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, the *Grauniad* now has another thumping headache in the form of its 25-year-old Shanghai correspondent Benjamin Joffe-Walt.

Two weeks ago the paper ran a graphic eye-witness report by Joffe-Walt of the apparently fatal beating administered to Chinese democracy activist Lu Banglie. But it soon emerged that Joffe-Walt's account was more than somewhat sexed-up.

He was summoned back to London to be grilled by a posse of executives, and last Monday a long article by readers' editor Ian Mayes admitted that the "grave flaws" in Joffe-Walt's journalism had "threatened the credibility and integrity of the *Guardian*'s reporting in China". The hack, he added, had been sent for counselling with a psychotherapist, who concluded that Joffe-Walt had "lost touch with reality".

All this is embarrassing enough. As with Dilpazier Aslam, however, some hacks are wondering how closely the *Grauniad* studied his CV before hiring him. An American by birth, Joffe-Walt was a trainee schoolteacher in Canada until February 2003, when he went to Baghdad as a guest of the Iraqi government to act as a "human shield", hoping to deter the Americans from attacking. Three weeks later he returned to Canada, complaining that his trip had been "very stressful". In an interview with *Newsweek* he then declared himself a supporter of the Earth Liberation Front – an American eco-terrorist group which has claimed responsibility for dozens of firebombings and arson attacks in recent years.

Quite how such a person managed to resurface within two years as a trusted foreign correspondent for the *Guardian* remains a mystery. No doubt the readers' editor is looking into it.

THE *Sun*'s executive editor Chris Roycroft-Davis is currently taking the waters at a London clinic, apparently off sick with "stress". He is rumoured to be after a £600,000 pay-off.

The reason for this sudden downturn in his health is that he's had to deal personally with the anger and resentment caused by management plan's to change everyone's rotas on the newsfloor. The idea is to increase the number of days worked by sub-editors without increasing their pay, by altering the existing four-night week to a nine-night fortnight. For three months, the luckless Roycroft-Davis has been seeing individual staff in one-on-one meetings to hear their views and field their complaints.

The pressure has obviously taken its toll. Alongside the awards, classic front pages and newspaper memorabilia displayed in the *Sun* newsroom, a book recently appeared – probably put there by some wag in management – titled *Stress in the Workplace – How to Cause It*. As the cover explains: "This book explodes the myth that a happy company is a productive one." And where did this book come from? Lo and behold, a stamp on the front cover reveals that it belongs in the executive editor's office.

WHO WAS the "senior national journalist" who put the boot into *Mirror* executive Sly Bailey on the front page of *Press Gazette* last week, pointing out that "she has absolutely no understanding of how newspapers or journalists actually function, nor does she show any sign of caring very much. Her only interest is in making more profit while continually cutting jobs and costs on the nationals"?

Could it, perchance, be the victim of Bailey's most high-profile job cut, ex-*Mirror* editor Piers Morgan, who just happens to be the proprietor of *Press Gazette*?

Meanwhile, as the Street of Shame's trade paper, Moron's "weakly" gave surprisingly scant coverage to the trial of the *Mirror*'s former "City Slicker", James Hipwell.

It did note that Hipwell and fellow-Slicker Anil Bhoyrul were "said to have been among a number of the newspaper's employees who bought shares in Viglen the day before their article [puffing Viglen] appeared". And it quoted prosecution counsel Philip Katz saying that "various people at the *Mirror* had apparently taken advantage of the situation".

Alas, there was no space to name names. Perhaps just as well since the most prominent Viglen punter was none other than *Press Gazette*'s new owner, Piers "Morgan" Moron.

THE late Princess Diana had a rare day off from the *Daily Express* front page last Friday, when the paper instead splashed with the "EXCLUSIVE" (barring every other media outlet on the globe) story that Philip Green had awarded himself a pay packet of £1.2bn.

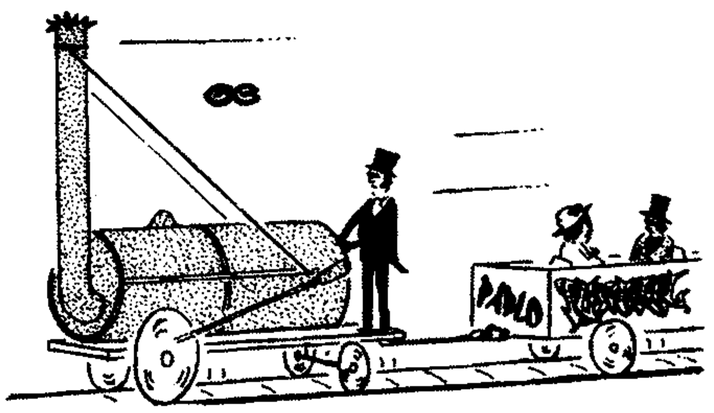
"The move establishes him as the most successful British retailer of his generation," gushed City Editor Stephen Kahn, while inside Jennifer Selway was invited in to Green's "gorgeous" office, "a soothing symphony of matt black, glossy black, silver and golden beige" to convey her congratulations to the "king of the high street" on what she described as "a marvellous day".

The four pages of gushing *OK!*-style coverage of Mr Green's windfall must have gone down particularly well in the cafes of his Bhs chain, where copies of the *Express* are handed out to customers for a mere 10p, bumping up the rag's readership figures immeasurably. This mutually beneficial deal is just one of the fruits of the close friendship between Green and Richard Desmond, part-time pornographer and proprietor of the *Daily Express*.

"THE British cabinet now owes it to those it has sent to their deaths to remove the army from Iraq with expedition and dignity," Simon Jenkins wrote in his *Guardian* column last Wednesday.

"Having just spent a week with that army I have no doubt of its morale and its loyalty. I also have no doubt of its ruthlessness in joint memoir operations. In the not too distant future, Blair, Straw, Reid and Hoon are going to know the full meaning of 'shock and awe'."

What memoirs can he have in mind? Though he omitted to mention it, Jenkins travelled to Iraq with General Sir Mike Jackson, chief of the general staff, who is due to retire soon. Jackson has observed with interest the success of recent memoirs by General Sir Rupert Smith and Colonel Tim Collins, but reckons he could do far better. It's a dead cert that he'll sign a lucrative publishing deal as soon as he hangs up his beret. And, if Jenkins's veiled hint is any guide, he will give full value for money.



FOLLOWING reports of the murder of a 24-year-old man on Clapham Common in what police believe was a homophobic attack, Sir Peregrine Worsthorne felt moved to pen a letter to the *Guardian*.

"It will be some years before homosexuals will be able to couple in public without giving offence; sometimes grave offence… this being so, it would surely be prudent for the gay community to practise a greater degree of discretion."

Can this be the same Peregrine Worsthorne who just one week previously was fondly recalling for the benefit of 400,000 *Guardian* readers how although "I have never been raped, there was a system of sexual favours at Stowe… A lot of buggery went on, and things in that area".

Curiously, although the *Guardian*'s feature also recorded reminiscences from George Melly about the "lovely time" he had had at the, er, hands of other boys at Stowe, neither elder statesman mentioned the most famous act of gay sex to have occurred at the school – the occasion when, according to Worsthorne in a book published in 1977, the young Melly had seduced him "with incredible despatch on the art room sofa one afternoon". Perhaps Perry was afraid of someone taking offence…

WITH *Sun* editor Rebekah Wade and her former columnist Richard Littlejohn kissing and making up ahead of a high-court showdown, it has now been agreed that the buggery-obsessed rent-a-ranter can move to his "spiritual home", the *Daily Mail*, on 26 December, a date which should at least ensure that his inaugural column has very few readers.

Mail readers did, however, get a sneak preview of Littlejohn's wit and wisdom while he was still under his jealously-guarded *Sun* contract. In November last year one of his *Sun* columns "hilariously" imagining what the Battle of Trafalgar would have been like "if Nelson had been subject to modern health and safety regulations" was reprinted word for word in the *Mail*'s "Peterborough" column – "the column written entirely by you, our readers" – courtesy of one Bruce Baker from Pinner in Middlesex.

Instead of shelling out a £1.2m salary to persuade Littlejohn to jump ship, wouldn't it have been cheaper for editor Paul Dacre to just carry on reprinting his sloppy seconds?

"SEX SLAVES RACKET IS SMASHED" screamed the *Lancashire Evening Post* last week, reporting a dawn raid by police on "premises where 'vulnerable' foreign women were being held". The main target for the raids had been the Brazilia health studio in Preston, "which police believe was being used as a sex parlour".

The *Post* was hungry for more details. "Do you know anything about the Brazilia health studio?" it asked at the foot of the front-page story. "Ring the *Evening Post* in confidence."

Alas! Several readers rang in to suggest that *Post* hacks study the classified ads on page 23 of the same day's edition. There, in the section where massage parlours and prostitutes promote their services, was a prominent ad offering "NEW exotic and European girls daily" – from none other than the Brazilia health studio.

WAS the *Independent* trying to shame its left-wing rival, the *Guardian*, by publishing its recent survey of "What Britain Earns"? Why else, in the media industry section of the survey, did it choose to include the salaries of *Grauniad* editor Alan Rusbridger (£373,000 plus £75,000 bonus), chief executive Carolyn McCall (£456,000) and company chairman Bob Phillis (£643,000), but not those of their counterparts elsewhere in the Street of Shame?

After all, McCall's income is easily topped by that of another newspaper chief executive, Ivan Fallon, who at the last count was raking in more than £650,000 in basic salary, bonuses and benefits. The company that Fallon heads is, er, *Independent* News and Media.

SUNDAY *Tottygraph* editor Sarah Sands recently promoted gorgeous pouting Topaz Amoore to the curiously-titled position of Assistant Editor (Business Culture), promising that "Topaz personifies the *Sunday Telegraph* slogan of brains and beauty… the twin themes of braining up and being more aesthetically pleasing will become increasingly evident in the *Sunday Telegraph*."

And indeed they did. The paper's business section on 16 October – four days after Amoore's uplifting – carried no fewer than five pictures of lissom young ladies in their underwear, accompanying articles on such vital topics as contract negotiations at Marks & Spencer and the trebling of turnover at bra manufacturers MJM International, leaving the star of page 10 – glamour model Jordan, naturally – looking positively overdressed in a backless pink number. How long before Amoore and Sands go the whole hog and rechristen the section the Titty Pages?

YEARS ago the music and sports writer Giles Smith agreed to a request from Dominic Lawson to write a spoof astrology column for the *Sunday Telegraph* magazine under the pseudonym Psychic Psmith.

This summer Smith learned that he was to be dropped as part of a relaunch planned for September. The relaunch was put off twice, so he agreed to continue writing his column in the meantime. But, with the final deadline approaching, Psychic Psmith decided to fill his last three columns with astrological predictions of his own demise because of a shake-up at the magazine. The first of these duly went through – until, late in the day, it was seen by the mag's editor Anna Murphy, who went ballistic.

Smith was asked to supply a replacement, with no reference to his sacking. When he told the magazine to take a running jump, his piece was pulled and replaced with a story about an orphaned gorilla who wears nappies.

Meanwhile, the relaunch is now scheduled for the first week in November and the order of the day is to go downmarket. The template for the redesign is the *Mail on Sunday*'s trashy magazine, *You*. Staff complain that they are "up to their eyeballs in make-up" – hardly surprising given the injunction from *Sun Tel* editor Sarah Sands to "think glam, *glam*, *GLAM!*" As a final insult, there is now talk of replacing the amusing Psychic Psmith with a "real" (*sic*) astrologer.

Do not resuscitate
Marina Hyde

The buzz around Guy Ritchie's new movie sounds career-ending

grauniad on line

IT SEEMED uncharacteristically generous of News International and WHSmug to subsidise sales of *Eye* 1143. And many readers were left thinking the *Eye* had entered some kind of unholy alliance with the Murdoch empire, when they were told they could get £1 off the (ahem, exceptionally good value) £1.40 cover price if they bought the *Times* as well.

In fact it was all part of a special offer in certain branches of WHSmug, offering £1 off any magazine with a purchase of the *Times*. What that meant, in effect, was a free *Times* with any magazine.

Using fellow publications in an offer – without letting their publishers know – is unusual. Buying up chocolate bars or DVDs to dish out in a promotion is one thing; but magazines have to account to advertisers and the Audit Bureau of Circulation for full price sales – just as the *Times* does. That would presumably be the reason for the bizarre nature of the offer. Phrasing that honestly offered a free *Times* would, of course, eat into its own ABC figures.

"If it weren't for Nelson, we'd all be speaking French... drinking wine... working a 38-hour week, taking August off... bloody Nelson"

HOW JOURNALISM WORKS

THE *Independent on Sunday* relaunched itself as a compact with a corking scoop – "Revealed: IRA bombs killed eight British soldiers in Iraq."

It claimed that insurgents in Iraq were using bombs triggered by infra-red beams, which "were developed by the IRA using technology passed on by the security services in a botched 'sting' operation more than a decade ago. This contradicts the British government's claims that Iran's Revolutionary Guard is helping Shia insurgents to make the devices."

Why did no other British or Irish paper – not even the *Indie* – follow up this remarkable story? Because, er, it's cobblers. British soldiers who've served in both Iraq and South Armagh are certain that the roadside bombs currently being used against them are quite unlike anything they faced in Ulster.

Initially both Sunni and Shia insurgents used ordnance left lying around following the disbandment of the Iraqi armed forces. Later, and reflecting the astonishing fact that many Muslims can read books on guerrilla warfare and even use the newfangled internet, especially those Ba'athists educated in the technical departments of British universities, improvised roadside devices began to appear.

These generally skipped infra-red (to which the British army developed successful counter measures in Ulster three decades ago), and instead made use of mobile phones. Devices detonated most recently are even more sophisticated, suggesting that they're professionally manufactured (for example in Iran) and then given to anyone willing to use them against western invaders who might one day threaten another part of the Axis of Evil.

The *Sindie*'s story was mainly the work of Greg Harkin, who formerly worked for the *Sunday People* and *Daily Mirror*. At the *People* he was injuncted by the Ministry of Defence after repeating allegations made to the *Sunday Times* by the pseudonymous "Martin Ingram", one of a small group of ex-soldiers with a long list of grievances, mainly about pay and pension arrangements. "Ingram" may well be the *Sindie*'s mysterious "former agent who infiltrated the IRA", who knows for a fact that the Provos are behind today's violence in Iraq. Harkin and "Ingram" also co-authored the book *Stakeknife – Britain's Secret Agents in Ireland.*

More recently Harkin was recruited by David "Rommel" Montgomery to launch a cross-community paper in North Ireland which he claimed would "transform the market". *Daily View* hit the newsstands on 4 April 2005 and closed down on 6 May 2005, with sales of under 1,000 a day. During its short life, Harkin's paper was noted for strange and generally uncheckable stories, including claims that the essentially defunct National Front was behind the latest Ulster ructions.

Now the *Sindie* is printing his nonsense. Why?

IN THE TEAROOM

IN DRAWING up this week's white paper, Education Secretary Ruth Kelly has been trying to serve two masters without falling between two stools. No wonder she seems a bit unsteady on her pins.

Education is a big part of the PM's "legacy agenda" – an inflated way of saying that Tony Blair is desperate to leave at least one of the public services in marginally better shape than the pisspoor condition he found it in on coming into government in 1997. A modest ambition perhaps, but vital not only for the prime minister's sense of self-worth, but also for fixing his exit date. Alas, schools policy is inextricably bound-up with all that "equality" and "fairness" stuff that Ms Kelly's next boss, Gordon Brown, says he's keen on. So, on the one hand she's had to please Mr Tony by being really "radical" and taking more schools away from sclerotic local authorities and turning them into charities – rather like Eton. And on the other, she's had to float wheezes about busing slum kids into leafy suburbs to appease the equality lobby. Quite what middle-class parents who've already paid sixty grand extra on their mortgages to get little Joshua into a decent catchment area will make of that one, we'll have to wait and see.

In Cabinet last week, ministers of all stripes enjoyed trying to knock poor Ms Kelly off her political tightrope. Even Geoff Hoon, whose sole purpose in government has hitherto been to appear loyal, is reported to have discovered a mind of his own. And not even Patricia Hewitt, who's in much the same pickle as Kelly over NHS reform, could keep discreetly schtum. But it was John Prescott's blustering attack on educational elitism that hit the headlines. While there's no doubt something to all that talk of "authority visible draining away from the PM", let's not forget that he's got at least one reshuffle left in him. If he keeps on misbehaving, Prezza just might be the first person ever to be booted up the arse by a lame duck.

'Quintus Slide'

IN Lord Gnome's quest to unravel the great mystery of our times – what does John Prescott actually *do*? – the latest useful clue is a Sits Vac advert in the *Times* last week, seeking applicants for the post of chief planner in the office of the deputy prime minister.

"You will play a major role," it babbles, "in driving forward the implementation of the government's vision… delivery of sustainable communities… implement new policy… re-engineer the operation… actively promote a change of culture… a demanding agenda… interaction… lead proactively."

Oh, and successful applicants must have "an ability to communicate effectively with all stakeholders" – just like Prezza himself.

TURBULENT times at the Department of Trade and Industry, where a senior official recruited from the private sector has been sacked for taking "improper trips" to Miami and the Caribbean.

"This is the second recent collision at the DTI between traditional civil service rules and the more commercial ethos introduced since Whitehall started hiring a large number of private-sector executives," the *Guardian* observed last week, citing the case of an export promoter at the department who had tried to take a Swiss bank payment of £115,000 as a kickback for arranging a machinery export deal.

Now that the DTI has belatedly acknowledged the problem, perhaps it will investigate other "collisions". One case ripe for scrutiny is that of Joan MacNaughton, head of the DTI's energy division, and her relations with the ubiquitous American businesswoman Barbara Thomas, aka Lady Judge.

As we reported in *Eye* 1141, Thomas sits on the board of the property company Quintain Estates, where in January last year she secured a non-executive directorship for her friend Joan MacNaughton. (Under "new" Labour, mandarins are encouraged to become more "business-minded" by moonlighting in the private sector.) A few months later, wearing her DTI hat, MacNaughton chaired a Whitehall selection panel to choose a new chairman for the Atomic Energy Authority. Lo and behold, the job went to… Barbara Thomas.

When challenged by the *Eye* last month, the DTI insisted this was all fully in accord with the Nolan principles governing public appointments. It also refused to answer our question as to whether MacNaughton and her husband were holiday guests of Barbara Thomas last year (the time of the AEA appointment) at her house in the South of France. "Holiday arrangements," it said, "are a private matter."

Following last week's revelations, will it now abandon this insouciance?

EDWARD LEIGH, chairman of the Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC), wasted no time in blaming civil servants at the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for the £5bn cost over-runs on major procurement in 2003 and 2004. "Doubtless their failure in this respect is never held against them and they proceed serenely on in their careers without censure," he mused.

Another group of people who pass serenely from one cock-up to another with careers and wallets enhanced, but who somehow escaped Leigh's ire, are the armies of consultants employed by the MoD on procurement.

Chief among them is PricewaterhouseCoopers, which has worked with the department for 20 years and declares its skill in "getting military platforms and equipment procurement right, at the right price" – precisely the opposite of what the PAC found. For this expertise PwC earns tens of millions of pounds every year, with MoD reports showing that in 2001/02 the firm was paid somewhere between £100m and £250m.

The other MoD favourite is McKinsey, which brought "Smart Procurement" into the department six years ago. This system, said the PAC, was fine in principle but "is at risk of becoming the latest in a long line of failed attempts to improve defence procurement." McKinsey has since trousered a further £7m for more procurement reform advice and is now working on a £23m logistics "transformation" project.

Strangely parliament's watchdog on government spending didn't have a bad word to say about the MoD's continuing habit of filling the consultants' pockets… despite the evidence it doesn't work.

FACED with paralysing industrial action, the government has finally acted on the "two tier" workforce in the NHS.

Cleaners, porters and other support staff employed by contractors under outsourcing contracts, mostly on the minimum wage, will be paid the same £5.65 per hour (soon to go up to £5.85) that their NHS-employed colleagues have been awarded under the Agenda for Change initiative.

Naturally the private companies that profit from these poverty-level wages won't be coughing up. Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt has agreed that the £75m a year needed will be met by the taxpayer, blowing apart the economic case for bringing in private operators to save money in the first place.

The climbdown also makes a mockery of the rationale behind the private finance initiative under which such services are always outsourced. PFI deals go ahead on the basis that the risks in providing services are borne by the private sector, a fantasy that is exposed when the government steps in as soon as anyone has to cough up any money.

On the planet where health policy is developed, however, this isn't a humiliating defeat for private sector involvement. Quite the contrary: in Hewitt's words it "demonstrates that all parties… can work together effectively to achieve the reform of the NHS to create a modern health service".

For the contractors' side, the CBI's head of public services John Tizard rubbed his hands and said: "We welcome this agreement and the commitment to continued reform it embodies." Well what businessman wouldn't appreciate reforms that see the taxpayer foot a large part of his staff wage bill?

SOMEHOW both sides in the public sector pension dispute have managed to claim victory.

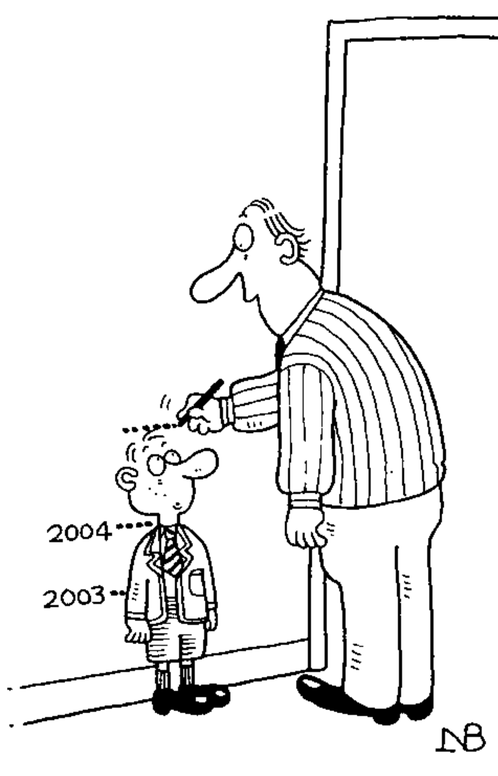
The government has a deal it reckons saves it the £13bn it wanted to save under its original plans to phase in later retirement, while the workers will still retire at 60 as they were promised when they signed up to the job.

The losers are those without a voice: future nurses, teachers and civil servants who will pay for the government's concession to current staff by working until they are 65 on poorer pension terms.

Although protecting the conditions of the next generation of public sector workers was always part of the unions' objections to the government's plans, it was also easily dropped when the time came to talk turkey.

Anxious to avoid accusations of an "I'm all right Jack" deal, however, the unions point to their success in securing the option for new staff to retire at 60 as long as they make hefty extra contributions. But this is scant consolation as a decent pension provides most compensation for the meagre wages of those at the bottom of the pile who can least afford to put more aside. The result will be public servants working for decades under vastly inferior conditions to colleagues recruited just before them.

So while the government keeps its savings and existing staff can still call it a day at 60, the great public sector pensions compromise immediately ushers in the kind of "two tier workforce" that causes such resentment and that the unions have been fighting against in other areas for years.



"According to the Chancellor's growth forecast, you'll be 6'4" next year"

The two-year leak investigation was launched after the disclosure in July 2003 of the name of a CIA undercover official, Valerie Plume. Her husband, Joseph Wilson, a former US ambassador, claimed that her identity had been intentionally leaked by the madministration

grauniad

EU-phemisms

Yes

THE junk food giants are very nervous about MP Mary Creagh's Children's Food Bill. With 252 parliamentary colleagues promising support on its second reading on 28 October, the bill is challenging the junk merchants' right to sell sugary, fatty and salty snacks to youngsters.

The Government has already adopted some of the bill's provisions, like banning junk food from school vending machines; but the chocolate and crisp sellers are determined to hold the line against a ban on TV advertising before 9pm.

The industry's deep fear of a possible ban can be seen in the way its lobbying has shifted from clumsy arguments to determined efforts to become "new" Labour's best friend.

For example, the initial corporate response to accusations over poor diet and obesity was laughable. In 2003 Kellogg's European President Tim Mobsby told MPs on the Health Select Committee he feared children would simply "stop eating breakfast" if he could not advertise Chocolate Frosties or "Bart Simpson's Eat My Shorts" breakfast cereal on the telly.

Realising the threat of a ban is real, however, the sugar salesman and fat vendors have been desperate to reposition their products at the heart of "new" Labour's "project", trying to link their products to the "citizenship" and "inclusion" agendas.

Hence Cadbury's paid for a meeting at the Labour Party conference in September addressed by Home Office Minister Hazel Blears alongside Cadbury's own spin doctor, Neil Makin, with the title "Yobs or teen angels: how do we turn young people into active citizens?" Nestlé has also convinced the Government that confectioners can guide the young. Next month Minister for Young People Angela Eagle and Ed Miliband MP will speak at a Nestlé-funded conference on Labour's green paper on youth services, alongside Nestlé executive Ian Rayson. Eagle already spoke at a similar Nestlé-funded conference event in Brighton.

CELEBRATIONS over the Department for International Development's (DfID) pledge not to fund any more campaigns promoting privatisation abroad may be short-lived.

The Guardian reports this week that the eight companies bidding for a "communication support" project in Sierra Leone have been told the contract is not intended "to fund any campaign to promote privatisation". But we already know that DfID doesn't consider "information campaigns" to be *promoting* privatisation in any way (*Eye* 1141).

DfID has previously funded such "information campaigns" as the writing of a pop song in Tanzania, celebrating the joys of private investment in water. It also spent £93,000 funding the pro-privatisation Adam Smith Institute to make a 25-minute film for Indian television on the benefits of flogging off state assets (*Eye* 1139).

THE Government could save £21.5bn if only it were more efficient, said last year's Gershon review of public spending.

Hence the launch later this month of Aries, a free online service from the National Audit Office, HM Revenue & Customs, the Office of Government Commerce and private advisers Belmin Group. Its aim? To help agencies and quangos claw back some of that wasted money by streamlining their purchasing.

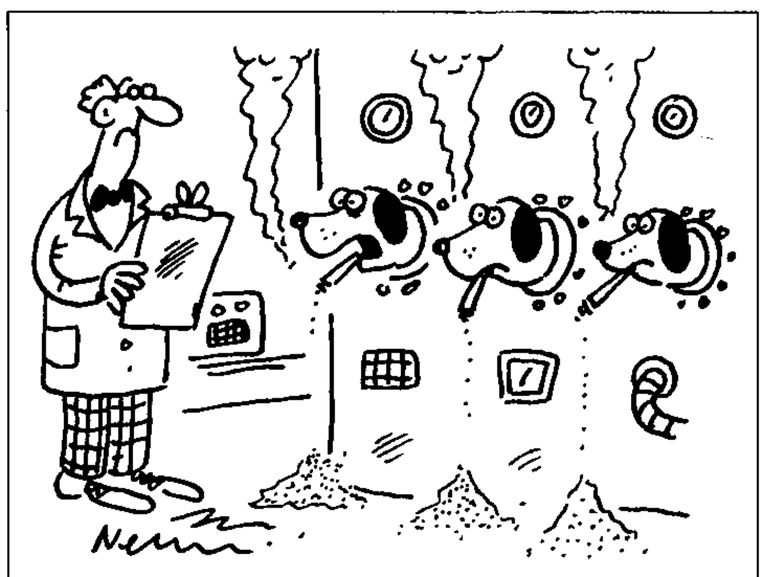
So where does the money-saving expertise come from? One person speaking at the launch will be Peter Ward, finance director of JobcentrePlus. This is the same JobCentrePlus that last year overspent its £950m training budget by £108m, and is using this year's budget to plug the shortfall. It is also the one now forced to suspend language courses, mentoring and entrepreneurial support, sending training firms out of business and leaving thousands of the unemployed high and dry.

The jury is still out on whether "e-invoicing" might have prevented these slip-ups.

WITH the government increasingly keen on improving efficiency, one department has made an interesting choice of consultant to conduct its "efficiency review" following the recommendations of Sir Peter Gershon.

The lucky firm, which earned nearly £5m from the department in consultancy fees in the last two financial years, was EDS, architect of many disasters including the spectacularly inefficient launch of tax credits in 2003, for which the Revenue is seeking compensation and muttering dark threats about going to court.

So which department employed the bungling EDS as an efficiency adviser so soon after this cock-up? Yep, the Inland Revenue.



"If they ban smoking in the workplace, we've had it"

FAG ENDS

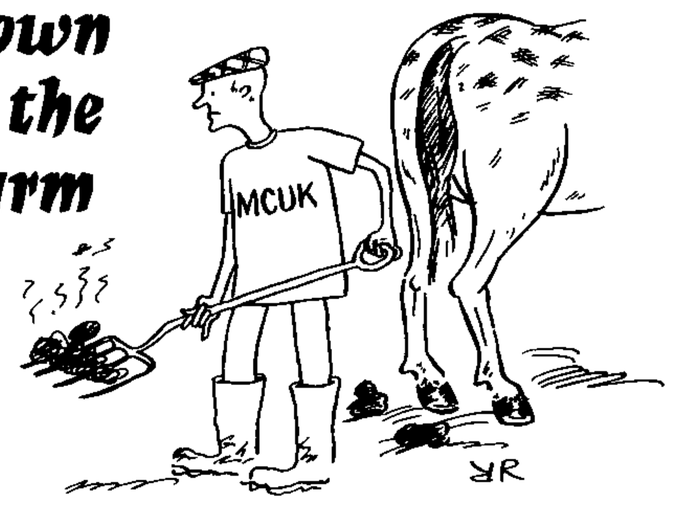
SUPPORTERS of Gorgeous George Galloway may be unfazed by his sycophancy towards Saddam and his enthusiasm for car-bombers in Iraq, but how much longer will they endure his politically incorrect smoking habit?

At the Bloomsbury Theatre last week, before curtain-up for *An Audience With George Galloway*, the Respect MP puffed away on a huge cigar backstage, despite being asked to desist three times by the general manager.

Fearful that Galloway's stogie might set off the smoke alarm and thus activate the sprinkler system, a stage manager issued a backstage call at the interval reminding everyone that the theatre was a no-smoking building and asking anyone who was smoking to please extinguish it.

"Well, that was subtle," Galloway's assistant growled at the female SM. George himself then appeared. Noting her Irish accent, he suggested the no-smoking rule must be "something you picked up in Ireland". Whereupon he strode on stage to the sound of Aretha Franklin singing R-E-S-P-E-C-T!

Down on the Farm



NORMALLY the European Union has no more enthusiastic supporters than Europe's "greens" – the Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, etc – who like the idea that, on environmental issues, there is a Big Brother in Brussels with the power to whip backsliders into line.

One issue which puts the greens on the spot, however, is genetically modified crops. So passionate is the dislike of Europe's greenies for the idea of GM crops that various EU countries have supported moves to declare "GM free" zones. In 2003 the EU's environment ministers even voted in support of their right to do so. But the European Commission, which has long since fallen under the thrall of those pro-GM lobbyists who know where real power lies in the EU, thought otherwise.

When the regional government of Upper Austria decided to use its country's genetic technology prohibition law, passed in 2000, to declare the region "GM free", Brussels decided it was time for a trial of strength. The Austrian government cited article 95 of the Treaty of Rome, which gives member states the right to take specific actions to protect their own environment. But Brussels took them to the European Court of Justice, claiming that they hadn't produced any scientific evidence to justify such a move, and this was to be viewed as a test case. If Austria lost, then other countries which have similarly claimed the right to declare GM-free zones – France, Germany, Luxembourg and Greece – could be forced to follow.

Not exactly to universal astonishment, the ECJ's Court of First Instance has now found in favour of the European Commission and against Austria – which sets up an interesting situation. Under directive 2001/18 on the marketing of GM crops, the next move lies with the EU's agriculture ministers, probably when they meet next month. Unless the five offending countries can defeat the commission by mustering a "blocking majority" of 75 percent, which will be difficult, they will all be forced to come into line. Furthermore, they will be deemed to have participated in a decision which overrules their right to make laws designed to protect their own environment.

Normally the sight of member states being forced to kowtow to Brussels is the kind of thing which delights the "greenies". But on this occasion from no one will the howls of protest be louder than Friends of the Earth and their allies.

All of this is curiously reminiscent of a bizarre scene in the Welsh Assembly in 2000, when the newly-elected assemblypersons voted for Wales to become Europe's first "GM-free zone". No one was more enthusiastic in support of the motion than Wales's first agriculture minister, the keen vegetarian and tree-hugger Christine Gwyther. But she then left the chamber to confer with her officials, and a short while later returned looking somewhat sheepish (if one is permitted to compare veggies to food animals). She had to inform the assembly that to declare the principality a "GM-free zone" would not be legally permissible. What she did not reveal was that her officials had told her it would be against the law because, since 1990, the ultimate power to legislate on GM crops had been handed to Brussels, and Brussels wouldn't allow it. Five years later, it seems various other governments, led by that of Upper Austria, are somewhat belatedly about to learn the same lesson.

'Muckspreader'

MEDIA NEWS

"ACCURACY and authority still really matter to us," said BBC Director-General Mark Thompson in a speech this summer.

Alas, his message didn't reach News 24 where hack Julian Worricker was interviewing two Tory MPs about the party's leadership elections. "I'm joined now by Nigel Waterson MP, once a Ken Clarke supporter and now backing David Cameron," he revealed.

"I'm backing Liam Fox, actually," replied Waterson.

Unperturbed, Worricker then turned to his other guest, Stewart Jackson MP, who throughout the interview was captioned: "Nigel Waterson: Conservative backing David Cameron".

WHEN former Olympic runner and BBC commentator Brendan Foster is not selling coverage of his own events to the corporation, his production company Film Nova puts together highlights packages of races such as the Great South Run in Portsmouth, shown on Channel 5 two weeks ago.

Alas! John Yuda, the Tanzanian leading the Portsmouth race by about 30 yards at halfway, managed to follow the Nova cameraman on his motorbike twice around a roundabout, adding about 100 yards to the route and putting him 20 yards down on the new race leaders once he got back on the correct course.

"Going around the roundabout twice probably cost me several seconds," Yuda told the press after eventually winning the 10-mile race. Yet although the runner was clearly in focus for Nova's camera crew, not a frame of this unfortunate turn of events appeared in the edit broadcast on Channel 5.

THE BBC's commitment to "Value for Money" took another pounding thanks to science correspondent David Shukman's decision to hire a helicopter to fly himself and his crew over Lea Valley Park while assessing the bird flu risks posed by migratory wildfowl.

The pictures they took of ducks and geese on the ponds were on screen on BBC1 and News 24 for less than ten seconds. Lesser reporters have to make do with duck pond shots at ground level.

"WE should normally only rely on an agency report if it can be substantiated by a BBC correspondent," decrees the BBC's Producer Guidelines. But on BBC News 24 the rule is routinely flouted.

Almost every "Breaking News" story is sourced on screen to Reuters, studio newsreaders adding the phrase: "and we'll bring you more on that story as we get it". Only then is the Reuters wire faxed to the nearest available correspondent to be followed up.

THERE was general incredulity at the choice of lead item on the BBC's *Ten O'clock News* on 17 October.

Billed as "exclusive", it was neither exclusive nor news: a profile of the RAF's (already much profiled) Quick Reaction Alert aircraft, a military unit that has remained fundamentally unchanged since its inception as recently as... 1975.

With jerky camera movements Brian Hanrahan breathlessly explained how the young men and women of the QRA were now poised to shoot down an airliner at Tony Blair's say so. Frightening stuff. In reality the worst case scenario of shooting down a highjacked airliner has *always* been a possibility for the QRA. It may have been highlighted by the 11 September attacks, but even that was four years ago.

Needless terror-related scaremongering has rarely been so obviously on view – and this from the corporation that gave us *The Power of Nightmares*, a series that graphically exposed this type of dangerous nonsense.

Not surprisingly, a scan of major British news websites the next morning carried nary a word...

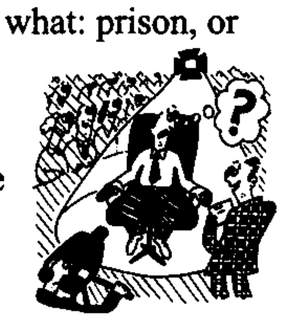
THE new bantamweight *Grauniad* devoted nearly a page to the news that Britain's two dead-end heavyweight boxers, Audley Harrison and Danny Williams, are due to go into the ring together in December, and that the bout will be shown on ITV.

The *Guardian*'s coverage – far greater than anything offered by other newspapers – was written by John Rawling, who has long managed to provide boxing copy for the paper off the back of his job as the BBC's boxing commentator. His cosy arrangement with the Beeb came to an end a couple of months ago. But nowhere in the *Grauniad* report was there any mention that the "big" fight is to be presented on telly by ITV's new star commentator – John Rawling.

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Oscar Wilde, Adolf Hitler and Jeffrey Archer have all written books about their experiences in what: prison, or the Conservative Party?



Contestant: The Conservative Party.

AR: What is the full name of Karl Marx's book: Das...?

Contestant: Kampf.

National Lottery: In It To Win It, BBC1

Dale Winton: In Shakespeare's play A Midsummer Night's Dream, who was king of the fairies?

Contestant: I'm not very good at history.

Family Fortunes, Challenge TV

Les Dennis: Give another word for telltale.

Contestant: Telltale.

OBN

"She has risen above the moment and entered myth, so much so that it almost comes as a surprise that she is still flesh and blood. No offence intended to her august guest (the Queen) next Thursday, but Margaret Thatcher is the greatest living Englishwoman."

CHARLES MOORE
Daily Telegraph

EVERY actor needs a good agent. And this certainly appears to be true of Ross Kemp, who makes a bank manager-pleasing (surely "triumphant"?) return to the BBC's *EastEnders* this week.

"He has enjoyed his recent three-week stint so much he is in talks to return again in the New Year, this time for four months," reported one newspaper in a lengthy profile of the actor. "But Ross is keen to point out that his brief return to *EastEnders* has not jeopardised his relationship with ITV bosses and he is very much looking forward to the next series of *Ultimate Force*. As part of the deal to return to the Beeb, Ross is in talks to direct his own show and star in a BBC drama, as well as *EastEnders*. He says: 'If things work out the way I want I will be back and I will be directing some BBC shows at the end of 2006.'"

Which newspaper printed this 1,100-word contract negotiation? Why the *Sun*, of course, edited by Rebekah Wade, also known as Mrs Ross Kemp.

FLUSHED with his success at spending £93m in the last year turning BBC Three into the digital destination where you're never more than an hour away from a repeat of *Two Pints of Lager And A Packet of Crisps*, channel controller Stuart Murphy has been poached by independent producers RDF.

He will now be the "creative director" of the firm best known for the series *Wife Swap* and *Faking It* – an appropriate position, given that after several years of marriage Murphy recently swapped his own wife for a male partner.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

FASHION EDITORS
GOSH APPARENTLY BLACK IS BACK!
WOW THAT'S A SURPRISE!!!
SO BLACK IS THE NEW BLACK!
UNBELIEVABLE. I REALLY THOUGHT BLACK WOULD LAST !!!

I-SKY

"SKY'S NEW DAWN: Sky News will relaunch today after moving to a new £10m studio and signing stars from rival channels. Coverage will switch to the state-of-the-art newsroom in Isleworth, Middlesex, at 6am from the studio next door where it launched as Britain's first 24-hour news channel in 1989..."

– "News" story in the Sun, 24 October

● *On sale now – 'Mediaballs 2'. Call 0870 750 1712 or order online from www.private-eye.co.uk* ●

PAUL FOOT AWARD

FOGHORN-voiced hack John Sweeney has been the recipient of several *Eye* awards over the years – sharing the *Lunchtime O'Booze Award* 2002 with his *Observer* colleagues, competing for the *Most Overwrought Hack Award* 2000 for millennium coverage and running away with the *Fastest Reader of the Scott Report* in 1996.

But on 11 October Sweeney was the recipient of a proper prize of £5,000 as winner of the inaugural Paul Foot Award for Campaigning Journalism for his exposure of the wrongful conviction and imprisonment of mothers in "Shaken Baby Syndrome" cases. The award recognised his four-year investigation into the cases of Sally Clark, Angela Cannings and Donna Anthony, which led to the exposure of the prosecution's chief witness, the eminent paediatrician Sir Roy Meadow. The campaign culminated in Meadow being struck off by the General Medical Council.

The award was set up by *Private Eye* and *The Guardian* in memory of journalist Paul Foot who died last year. "Sweeney's relentless pursuit of justice was in the highest tradition of Paul Foot journalism," read Richard Stott's citation on behalf of the judging panel, consisting of himself, Ian Hislop, Alan Rusbridger, Bill Hagerty, Jeremy Dear and Richard Ingrams.

"Initially an unpopular and largely forgotten cause, a battle against apparently insuperable odds and finally the exposure of shocking incompetence and shortcomings in three Establishment professions – police, medicine and the law – that sentenced women to prison for crimes they did not commit, Sweeney's dogged highlighting of these injustices kept the flame of hope alight when it appeared extinguished for ever. As a result many cases have been referred to the Court of Appeal and the guidelines on expert witnesses in child abuse cases have been changed. The judges were unanimous in the view that the first award that bears his name could go to no finer example of the journalism Paul Foot graced for so long."

Wearing a red and white patterned shirt loud enough to match his voice, Sweeney accepted the award, giving a halting, and somewhat baffling, reading of Shelley's *England in 1819* rather than the conventional speech.

The runners-up, who each received £1,000, were:

Felicity Lawrence (with Hsiao-Hung Pai, Binka Le Breton, Carlos Guarita and Malgosia Ploro) – *The Guardian*, for what the judges described as a "painstaking and difficult year-long investigation" which exposed the exploitation of migrant workers by unscrupulous gang-masters. "She revealed widespread practices of cheap and illegal labour often housed in terrible conditions, the unacknowledged price we pay for massive supermarket profits. It is a world of Dickensian squalor, vicious exploitation, greed and government ignorance, exposed fearlessly by a brave reporter," said the judges.

Daniel Foggo and Charlotte Edwardes – *The Sunday Telegraph* for exposing the fact that the British Pregnancy Advisory Service – an NHS-funded charity and Britain's largest abortion provider – was facilitating illegal late abortions, described by the judges as "a show-stopper in true Foot tradition. Meticulously researched and well written, the report led inevitably to a Department of Health inquiry into the BPAS and a report critical of the agency by the chief medical officer."

Eamonn O'Neill – *The Herald* (Glasgow). "Foot relished nothing better than the pursuit of a bent copper," said the judges. "Eamonn O'Neill's tenacious and lengthy quest for justice in the case of Robert Brown, who spent 25 years in jail – put there by a detective later convicted for corruption – before being cleared of murder, echoes some of Paul's most famous campaigns. This was raw, cutting-edge journalism at its best."

Heather Brooke – whose work using the new Freedom of Information law has appeared in *The Daily Telegraph, Sunday Times, New Statesman, The Independent, The Guardian* and *The Times*. "The cornerstone of Paul's journalism was the public's right to know what their leaders were doing in their name," said the judges. "He took the view we probably wouldn't like it if we knew and that is why they lied and covered-up when they could."

The Bristolian – "Spiky, angry, iconoclastic, rude, abrasive. The 'smiter of the high and mighty' says *The Bristolian* on its masthead, evoking irresistible memories of early *Private Eye*," noted the judges. "Run on its wits, talent and a shoestring, *The Bristolian* is the authentic voice of the streets. Foot would have loved and admired its two-fingered approach."

"Wow! There were some roots on that one!"

In The Courts

AS Saddam Hussein entered the dock in Baghdad's green zone, where was Giovanni di Stefano, the self-publicist and curiously under-qualified "lawyer" (see *Eyes passim*) who announced last year that he had been recruited to the dictator's defence team and would be calling Donald Rumsfeld and George Bushes, both junior and senior, as witnesses?

Sadly, it appears he has been prevented from travelling to Iraq by the needs of an even more important client. Two weeks ago he popped up in the *Daily Star*, the only paper that will still give him the time of day, speaking on behalf of Nadine Milroy-Sloan, imprisoned for perverting the course of justice after falsely claiming she was raped by Neil and Christine Hamilton, claiming that "we have strong ground for appeal".

JUST FANCY THAT!

BBC Interviewer: Have you ever had a royal visitor?

12-year-old Pupil: We've had Tony Blair

– BBC 1 interview at Compton School, 12/10/05

HEALTH PRIVATISATION

THERE was no resignation and no apology from the board of the North West London Strategic Health Authority (NWLSHA) last week when it received the damning *Lessons Learned* review of the failed Paddington Health Campus (PHC) project.

The review, led by Nigel Vince, an independent Office of Government Commerce (OGC) consultant, found six occasions, starting in September 2002, when the plug could and should have been pulled on plans to merge St Mary's, The Royal Brompton and Harefield hospitals, plus Imperial College's National Heart and Lung Institute, together into one giant, spectacular PFI super-hospital at Paddington Basin (*Eyes passim*).

Instead, on each occasion health chiefs kept trying to find new solutions to the shortage of land at the site, throwing yet more good money after bad. The project finally died this summer when the Royal Brompton and Harefield Trust's board withdrew support over concerns about affordability – no wonder when the estimated cost had risen from £360m in 2000 to more than £1bn.

Vince accuses the bosses of the health authority and trusts of taking part in a "who blinks first dance" around the decision.

At a crowded public meeting of the NWLSHA board, SHA chief executive Gareth Goodier responded to the criticism saying: "Trying to get a quart into a pint pot was enormously difficult but there was the strongest support for the vision from the highest office in the land." Indeed. In late 2004 Tony Blair described the PHC as "extraordinary", "imaginative" and "state of the art".

Harefield councillor Richard Barnes, who sits on the SHA board, also noted that political pressures had been applied but added that it had been "cowardice" that prevented the authority from canning the project as it became less and less likely to work out.

Of the 69 people invited to be interviewed for the review, just three refused: NHS overlord Nigel Crisp; John Hutton, who was minister of state for health from 2001 until this May; and MP Karen Buck. Both Hutton and Buck had staunchly defended the PHC scheme in the Commons, with Buck claiming earlier this year that the "scheme has been subject to rigorous scrutiny in the Department of Health" and was being unfairly tarred with "negative publicity". Buck's confidence was no doubt bolstered by Hutton who had told her the DoH was "committed" to the project and that he was confident it had been properly managed.

The review also pointed out that the health chiefs had been "alerted many times by members of the public" to the numerous problems and failed to listen. Many of those members of the public attending the SHA board meeting demanded to see heads roll, or at the very least wanted an apology for the huge amounts of wasted money and effort that could have gone to make real improvements at London hospitals. They got neither.

BY 2008 primary care trusts (PCTs) will no longer provide health services such as district and community nursing, health visiting and community hospitals but will become mere "purchasers" of those services. No one yet knows from whom.

Last week it emerged that in Oxfordshire even the PCTs which will commission health provision for more than 600,000 people with a budget of £575m may soon be run by a private health care company too. That will make Oxfordshire the first county to have the private sector involved in every layer of health care provision and responsible for about 70 percent of the Oxfordshire NHS health budget.

Allyson Pollock, professor of health policy at University College London, maintains that "robust research in the US and our own research here has shown private health providers deliver worse care and at a greater cost than public providers".

But then market philosophy not "science-based health" is evidently driving the Department of Health agenda.

A leaked memo asks strategic health authorities around the country to identify some £250m of annual "management savings" they intend to make as a result of the PCT or "patient choice" reforms. Ministers want to be able to boast that NHS "modernisation" will mean an instant £250m of management savings to go straight into patient services – even if the figures subsequently turn out to be pie in the sky and costs go through the roof.

● *On sale now – "My Friend Footy" by Richard Ingrams. Call 0870 750 1712 or order online from www.private-eye.co.uk* ●

DOING THE ROUNDS

TWO studies published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* last week were widely touted in the media as more evidence that herceptin should be fast-tracked and available on the NHS for some women with early breast cancer, even before it is licensed for this purpose.

True, 40 such women have already received herceptin "off-licence" in the NHS, and many cheaper, safer drugs are currently used for treatments other than those stipulated in their original licence. But herceptin is prohibitively expensive and can cause severe cardiac side-effects. To rush it through without the resources and rigorous safety analysis could be disastrous.

Most clinical research is funded by drug companies with a vested interest in the result and their conclusions can't always be trusted. The first study in the *NEJM*, looked at HER2 (receptor) positive women who'd had chemotherapy and were randomised to a herceptin or a non-herceptin group. The study was funded by Roche, manufacturers of herceptin, and even then there was no significant difference in overall survival between the two groups at two years.

In the second study, chemotherapy given to HER2 positive women at the same time as herceptin gave an absolute risk reduction in recurrence of 12 percentage points and death of 8 percentage points at three years, compared to chemotherapy alone. The media preferred to quote more sensational relative risk reductions ("Drug halves breast cancer returns" — BBC News).

As ex-*British Medical Journal* editor Richard Smith put it, medical journals are now effectively an extension of the marketing arm of the pharmaceutical industry, and analysing research that has no long-term follow-up and may be biased is complex. This is precisely why the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (Nice) was set up, but it has suffered from lack of resources and the allegation that it rations as much according to cost as effectiveness. It would be far better if NICE openly rationed on price grounds, refusing to allow the use of drugs that the NHS simply cannot afford.

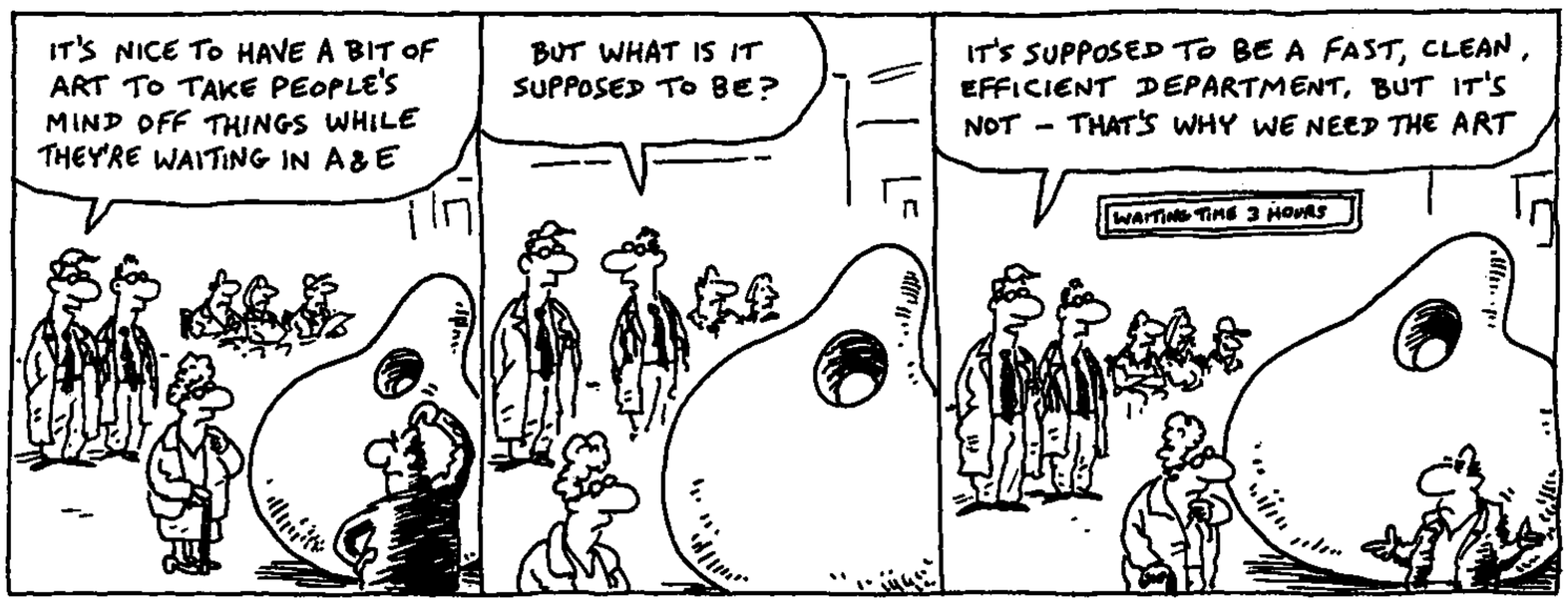
Herceptin costs £22,000 to £30,000 a year; but to screen all breast cancer patients to see if they might benefit and then prescribe would cost £200m a year. Then there's the small matter of finding enough pathologists and laboratories to analyse all the samples, and the staff and premises to supervise treatment and monitor for heart damage. If health secretary Patricia Hewitt believes this can be achieved in a cash-strapped NHS that has already used up this year's budget to pay off last year's debt and pension costs, she's as deluded as her boss. Having made her misguided promise, the only solution is to cut back on treatments in other, less sexy areas.

"Wonder drugs" rarely live up to expectations, as the recent debacles with HRT, SSRI anti-depressants and COX 2 painkillers testify. In a consumer society, patients will litigate to get a drug, but they'll also litigate if the drug has serious side-effects, and if the doctor is prescribing it off-licence he'll have very little defence. Herceptin may cause heart failure and even death, but its use is warranted in high-risk patients with metastatic cancer. However, extending it to lower-risk patients without proper evaluation will certainly cause more side effects and richer lawyers. Whether it lengthens life enough to justify the cost remains to be seen.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY


IT'S NICE TO HAVE A BIT OF ART TO TAKE PEOPLE'S MIND OFF THINGS WHILE THEY'RE WAITING IN A&E
BUT WHAT IS IT SUPPOSED TO BE?
IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A FAST, CLEAN, EFFICIENT DEPARTMENT, BUT IT'S NOT - THAT'S WHY WE NEED THE ART
WAITING TIME 3 HOURS

SIGNAL FAILURES

ANYONE tempted to characterise the winding up of Railtrack as a re-nationalisation in all but name ought to look at what happens when its successor has to borrow money.

Network Rail (NR) recently needed £21bn worth of finance which, had it been a truly public body, would have been relatively straightforward and available at the low interest rates that government borrowing can command. The contrived structure that keeps it off the government's books, however, meant it had to turn to the city to arrange its "debt issuance programme".

The lucky adviser on the deal was American giant Citibank, which was paid £6.5m for its trouble without having to compete for the work – on the strength, according to a Department of Transport spokesman, of its "unparalleled understanding of the issues".

Other firms were allowed in on the act, however, to help NR flog its bonds under the programme; and nine other investment banks were duly paid "commercially confidential" commissions (likely to be in the tens of millions) for placing the first £5bn of the debt with lenders.

The bondholders will also do very nicely as the debt carries a government guarantee in the form of a "letter of comfort" from the Transport Secretary but still pays 0.2 percent more than standard government borrowing. When the programme is fully up and running, that's around £40m extra income for them, and further cost to the railways, every year.

The arrangement will thus cost rail users hundreds of millions of pounds. But at least it achieves the all-important objective of making the government accounts look slightly better.

EVEN "new" Labour is starting to realise the stupidity of PFI on the London Underground.

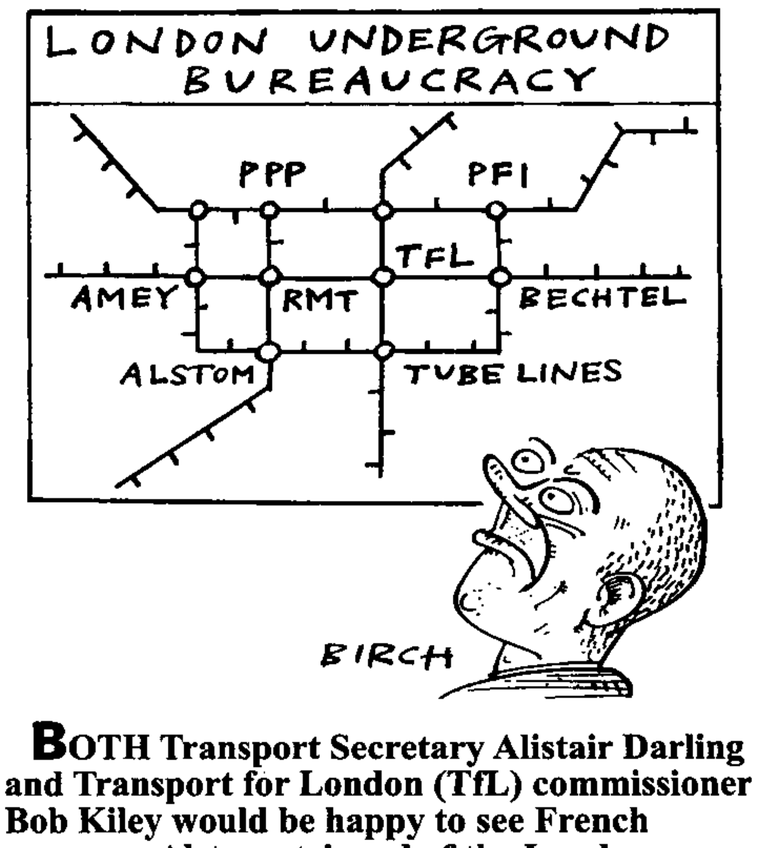
After the recent Northern line chaos, Transport Secretary Alistair Darling said he wouldn't stop London mayor Ken Livingstone scrapping a PFI deal for maintenance of Northern line trains. But he wouldn't allow big changes to privatised infrastructure maintenance because "to spend several years renegotiating it and undoing it would be to create even more difficulties".

These are almost the words used by Tony Blair in 2001 when he ruled out renationalising Railtrack because it would "probably take two years before we sorted everything out and, in those two years, we would have the railways in a state of paralysis and not able to start the investment programme that is there now ready to go". Then Railtrack went into administration, leaving billions of pounds of outstanding maintenance bills… and Blair forced through privatisation of LU infrastructure maintenance.

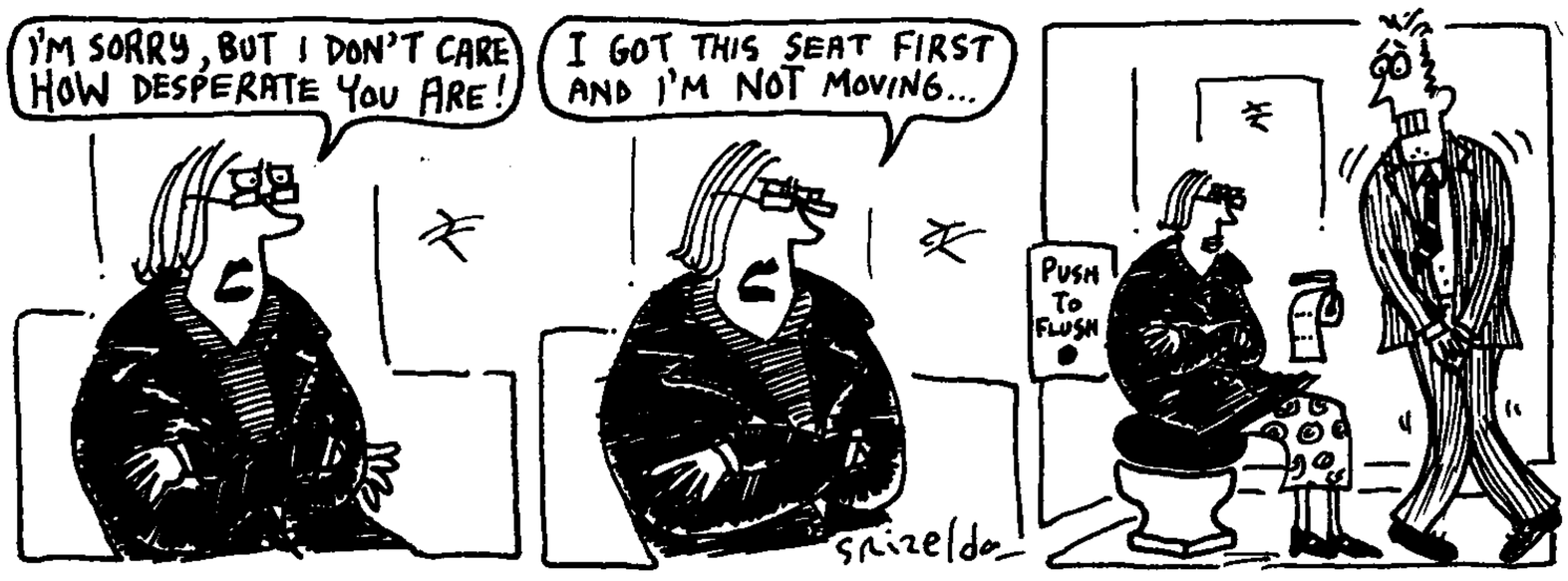
JUST FANCY THAT!

12 hours: Period LU's Northern Line was closed after 7 July terrorist attacks.

120 hours: Period LU's Northern Line was closed as a result of PFI contractors' failure to carry out maintenance this month.

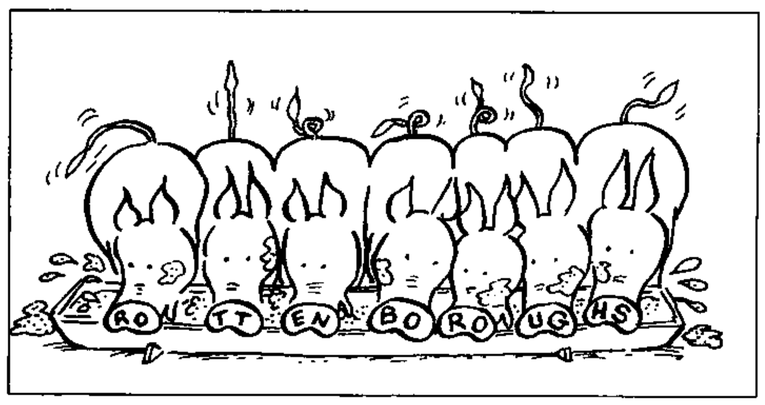


THE COMMUTERS



BOTH Transport Secretary Alistair Darling and Transport for London (TfL) commissioner Bob Kiley would be happy to see French company Alstom stripped of the London Underground PFI deal. But it's not that simple.

Alstom stands to earn hundreds of millions of pounds on the remainder of the contract and will not walk away quietly. Any sympathy for Tubelines (the consortium owned by Bechtel and Amey which runs the PPP that runs the PFI: confused yet?) should, however, be tempered. The consortium made £57m from the PPP last year – despite a highly critical report of its performance from TfL in July.



BLEEDING THE SYSTEM

LAMBETH council has again fallen victim to largescale internal fraud. £2.8m has been stolen from the housing department by a temporary worker recruited via an employment agency.

The money represents a huge chunk of that earmarked for improving Lambeth's rundown housing stock by installing central heating.

The fraudster "purchased" central heating systems from a firm based in the West Country which was not on the council's list of approved contractors – not surprisingly as he had set it up for the sole purpose of committing the fraud.

Between January and March this year the temp requested 28 separate payments, each for £100,000, for non-existent central heating equipment. Nobody at Lambeth thought to ask where the heating systems were being stored or installed. Cheques were simply signed and handed over. Four months later, in July, with the "temp" having disappeared abroad with the money, Lambeth "sacked" him. Initially the police were not called in to investigate the theft.

Tenants who need an extra blanket this winter may wonder why outgoing chief executive Faith Boardman got rid of the council's entire housing fraud team in 2001. It was disbanded after the then housing director John Broomfield claimed "there was no fraud in housing". Broomfield's successor, and the man in charge at the time of the fraud, was Stuart Holton. He is currently Lambeth's interim chief executive. Will he decide that his own performance as housing director was not up to scratch? Will heads roll? The tension is unbearable.

PS: Just two weeks before news of the fraud was made public, Lambeth won the Association of Public Service Excellence award... for having the best housing management team in the UK!

● **FOLLOWING the London bombings of 7 July, Labour-controlled Barking & Dagenham council offered to pay for minicabs for councillors on official business who were afraid to travel into London on public transport. Labour councillors Terry Wade and Val Rush took up the offer for a journey to City Hall on 20 July. The "special arrangement", noted in a report to the council's scrutiny management board dated 28 September, would be considered "if any Member who is a council representative on a London-wide body, and who does not personally like travelling into central London by underground train, etc, at these times, made a request for assistance..." Local cab firms say the trip from Dagenham to central London costs about £60. After the *Barking and Dagenham Post* ran the story, B&D council leader Charles Fairbrass had a hissy fit and is now refusing to talk to the local press.**

WAEST OF TIME

WESTMINSTER council, which pursued its former leader Dame Shirley Porter with all the vigour of a catatonic sloth when it was trying to recover £42m she owed for her gerrymandering, takes a different line with employees who have inadvertently been overpaid. It threatens them with bailiffs.

Westminster's Adult Education Service (WAES) regularly sends bailiffs after employees – usually teachers on low salaries – following over-payments caused by council error. Overpayments often continue to be made despite the employees concerned having alerted WAES to its mistakes.

One teacher, who left the council on sick pay when he developed a tumour on his spine, pleaded with WAES to stop paying his full salary into his bank account. When Westminster eventually did respond, it told him to repay the entire amount pronto or it would send the boys round. Another employee was overpaid £16,000, despite countless protestations, and then sent a threatening letter with no attempt to negotiate a settlement.

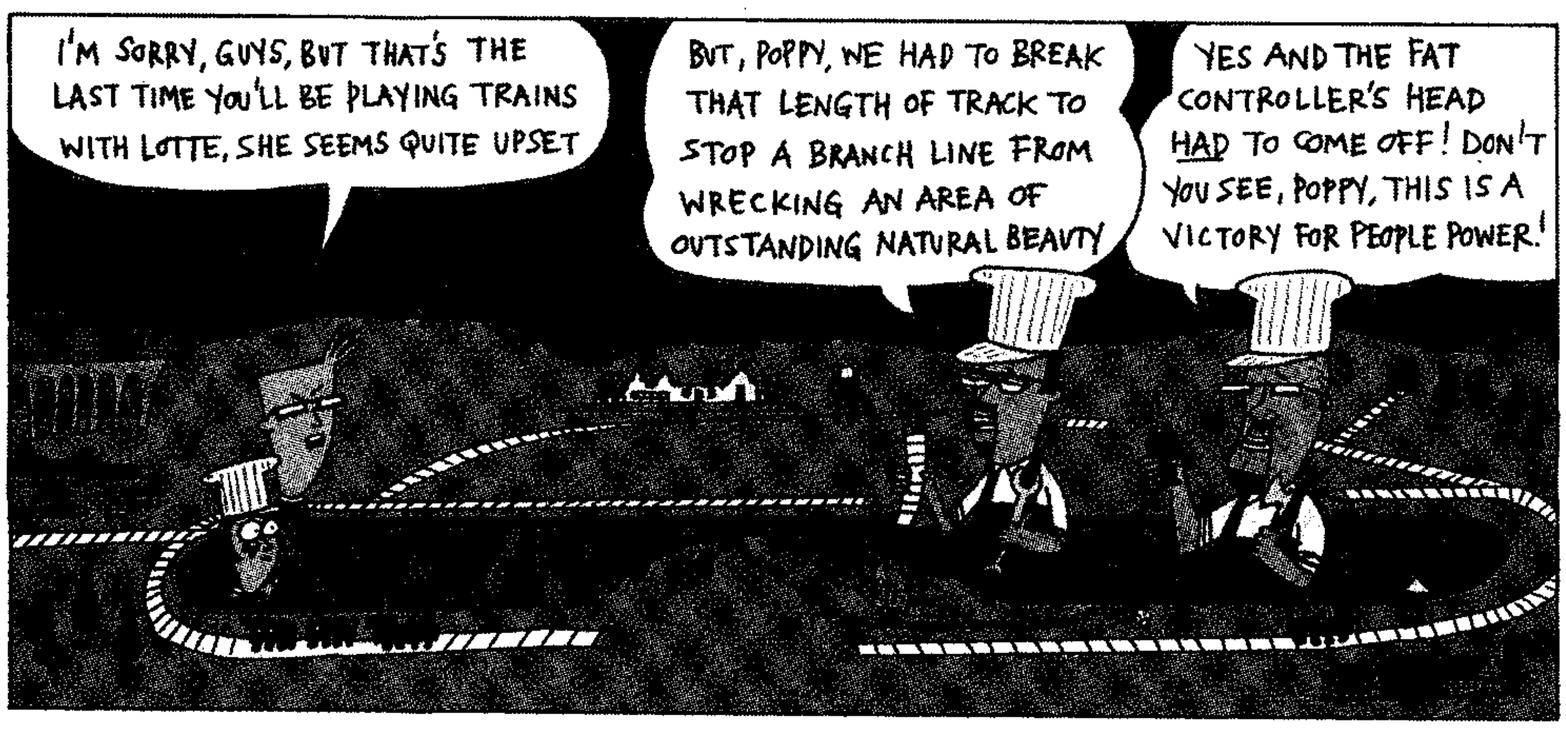
Former employees have also suffered. One ex-manager who tried to get a pension contribution refund was told it couldn't be made as no contribution had been paid. In fact the money had been deducted from the manager's pay packet every month for more than two years.

Earlier this year WAES senior managers decided it would be a tremendous wheeze to conduct a mock Ofsted inspection, in which they all "inspected" one another. The result? "excellent" ratings – and trebles – all round!

● **EGG-ON-FACE time for Lib Dem peer and chair of the Greater London Assembly, Sally Hamwee. Lady H is hosting a reception at the House of Lords on 15 November at which the mobile phone company Orange hopes to persuade "Parliamentarians, London Assembly members, councillors and other key stakeholders" of the benefits of its "innovative services designed for use throughout the public sector". Among the invitees are Hamwee's former colleagues from the London Borough of Richmond's planning committee. As mobile phone masts are a hot topic in Richmond, and the subject of many a contentious planning application, the council's lawyers have advised committee members to go nowhere near the bash, to avoid compromising their impartiality. Few would have been able to attend anyway, as the 15th is the date of the next Richmond council meeting – as Hamwee's Lib-Dem colleagues might have told her, had she asked.**

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


I'M SORRY, GUYS, BUT THAT'S THE LAST TIME YOU'LL BE PLAYING TRAINS WITH LOTTE, SHE SEEMS QUITE UPSET
BUT, POPPY, WE HAD TO BREAK THAT LENGTH OF TRACK TO STOP A BRANCH LINE FROM WRECKING AN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
YES AND THE FAT CONTROLLER'S HEAD HAD TO COME OFF! DON'T YOU SEE, POPPY, THIS IS A VICTORY FOR PEOPLE POWER!

EDUCASHUN NEWS

STRANGE bedfellows in sarf London, where Tory/Lib-Dem Lambeth council is in a muddle over a site for the proposed Brixton City Academy.

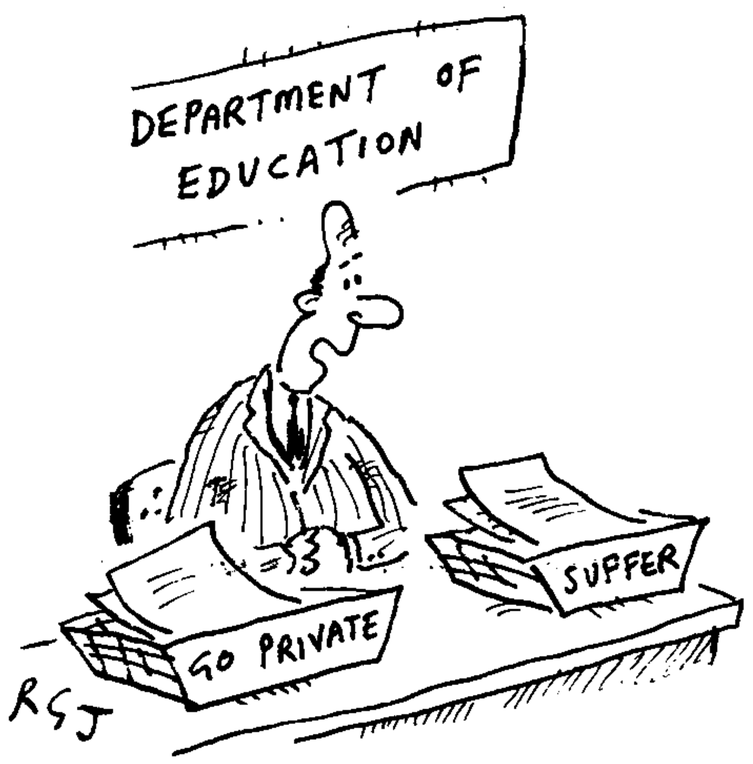
The academy is to be sponsored by ARK (Absolute Return for Kids), an educational charity founded by French hedge fund tycoon Arpad Busson, former partner of supermodel Elle Macpherson and a pal of Hugh Grant, Jemima Khan and Madonna – a man more used to appearing in the gossip columns than the education pages.

ARK's managing director is former *Observer* managing editor Lucy Heller (sister of columnist Zoe), while Labour peer Sally Morgan, Tony Blair's former political secretary, is an adviser to the board.

Earlier this year the council decided, after prolonged dithering, on a site for the academy on Shakespeare Road, Brixton. Local parents were not keen because it was next door to the depot used by the borough's refuse contractor, Cleanaway. So Lambeth said it would relocate the depot "to ensure safety for students".

However, the proposed site for the new depot, the Mahatma Gandhi industrial estate on Milkwood Road in Herne Hill, is itself opposite two schools and a children's play area. The council has already given businesses on the site, including an import/export business, organic veg wholesalers, baker, car repair workshop, etc, notice to quit. More than 100 local jobs will be at risk. Yet the council has yet to confirm planning permission for the dustcart depot or, for that matter, the city academy.

So what has the proposed academy got that the existing Jessop primary, Willowfield school and the recently refurbished Milkwood play area haven't? Shurely Lambeth's councillors haven't been dazzled by the "glamour" of this bizarre cocktail of international finance, diary page celebs and "new" Labour hangers-on?



"We're introducing choice into the education system"

COME December, pupils at Portway School in Bristol will move into their new £11m, PFI-funded buildings. But for how long?

Two years ago the school had 1,020 children on its books, but now it has only 782 and that figure is predicted to fall to 627 next year. Few parents want to send their children to Portway, as it has been in special measures for two years after a disastrous Ofsted report.

Staff numbers are being slashed, the school is more than £200,000 in the red, and some of those spankingly new buildings will remain closed, possibly never to open. Brian Styles, chairman of the interim executive brought in last year to run the school, has admitted "there will be more space than we need".

Much more space: the whole £11m could go down the drain and the school must surely close completely if numbers continue to drop much lower.

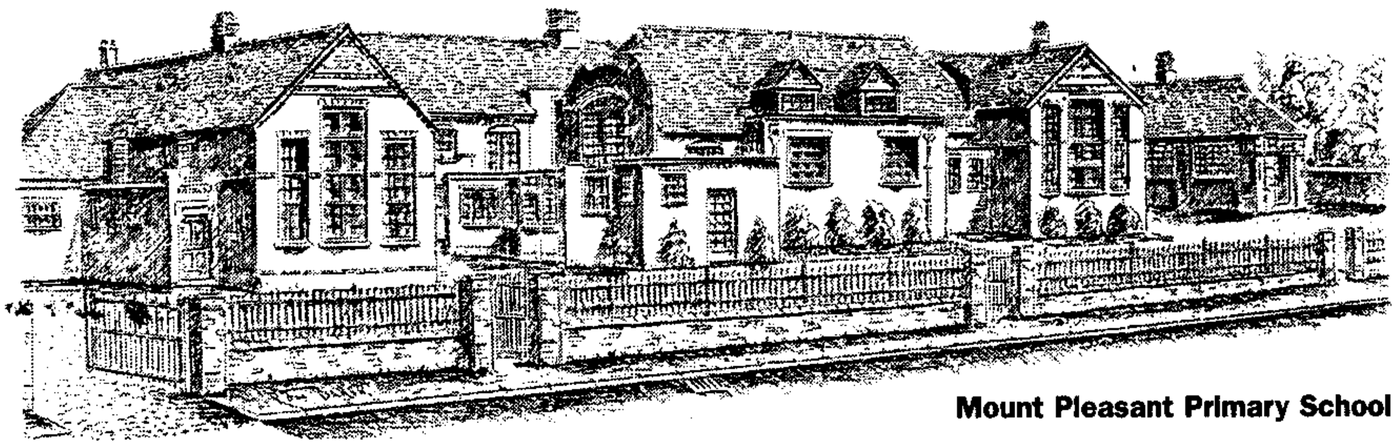
NOOKS and CORNERS

THE Black Country has an unfortunate reputation. Many assume that the "Black" refers to the smoky industry that once proliferated here. Strung out between Birmingham and Wolverhampton and criss-crossed by canals, railways and motorways, it consists of many towns and villages that all merge together. Some may seem to have little to offer, but there are treats – not least Dudley with its castle on a hill, surrounded by amazing Modern Movement zoo buildings by Lubetkin and Tecton.

Nearby Coseley cannot boast such attractions. With the demolition of its Council House following the 1966 local government reorganisation, its principal architectural monument, other than the churches, is the former Mount Pleasant Primary School. Built as a Board School in 1879 to the designs of one Archibald P. Brevitt and extended in 1913, it is a decent, serviceable, handsome gabled building of red brick with typical big windows. At present, the Mount Pleasant School houses Dudley's Archives and Local History Service, a much-used facility. But Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has neglected properly to maintain the building, so it has failed the official inspection for its suitability for storing original documents.

Dudley's solution to this problem is to move the archives to another, and more remote, old school at Kingswinford and to pay for this by selling the Coseley school – which almost inevitably will result in its demolition and replacement by private housing. This, however, has met with local opposition: 1,600 people have signed a petition against the council's plans and the Friends of Mount Pleasant School Coseley have been formed, supported by MP Ian Austin and local councillors. The council has not responded, although its leader has offered to consider a business plan for the school; but unless the council is prepared to work with the Friends and grant a lease on the building such a plan is difficult to produce. What ought to happen, of course, is simply for Dudley to repair the school and keep the archives there – removing the crude hoardings with which the windows have been blocked.

This may seem an obscure case, but it is typical of the neglect and waste of assets all over Britain – even if it pales compared with John Prescott's bulldozing of thousands of perfectly good terraced houses all over the North of England. The Friends have asked for Mount Pleasant School to be listed; but even if it is not listable, it is an attractive and useful masonry structure that deserves to be used and maintained, not flogged off and destroyed. Good luck to the Friends.



Mount Pleasant Primary School

FOR ONCE some good news. In 1999 (Eye 932), I reported the threat to St Leonard's-on-Sea Parish Church in Sussex, a handsome and unusual building by Adrian Gilbert Scott which replaced the old church destroyed by a flying bomb in 1944.

With the cliff behind moving and the Diocese of Chichester reluctant to spend money on stabilisation measures and little chance of support from elsewhere, the well-attended church looked certain to close soon after the passing of the second Christian Millennium. But now I learn that St Leonard's, now listed, still stands proudly by the English Channel, that English Heritage has offered a grant of £88,000 – the first to a "modern" church – and that more money is coming from European funds and elsewhere, so its future now looks secure. Well, hooray!

TESTING times for Fiona Reynolds' administration at the National Trust over the future of High Yewdale Farm near Coniston in the Lake District, where the hereditary tenant has retired.

As has been widely reported, the farm was bequeathed to the Trust in 1943 by Beatrix Potter on condition that it be let and managed "on the same lines as previously let and managed". But the Trust, for financial reasons, has now decided to divide up the land between four neighbouring farms and let the farmhouse for residential use.

Dismayed locals have appealed to the forward-looking Director-General of the Trust but have had no response. Amazingly, the Council of the Trust has dared to propose keeping High Yewdale Farm together – as Beatrix Potter wished – but the final say rests with the Board of Trustees, the new governing body established by Ms Reynolds as part of her reform of "governance". Interesting to see whether these 12 established figures respect the ostensibly democratic constitution of the Trust – or just do as they're told, as intended.

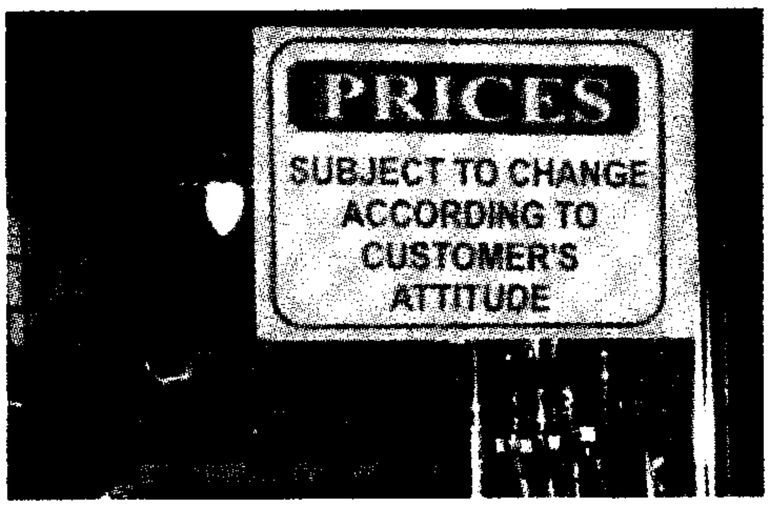
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

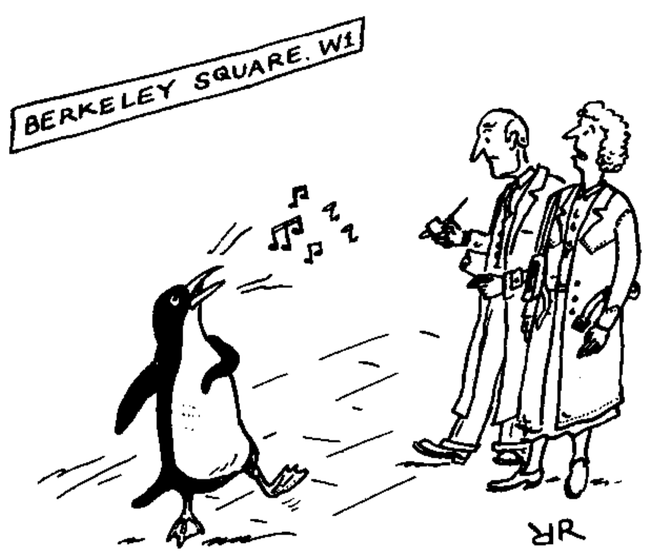
BY BIRCH

Rachel's filled the Tate Turbine Hall with thousands of identical boxes...
An old shed's the talk of the Turner show...
HOXTON SQUARE
We live in exciting times!

I-SPY *Champion pub, Wells Street, London*



Submitted by Chris Burrows. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*



"Now do you believe in global warming?"

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE not so funny pantomime of funding for the arts in Scotland has reached the point where nothing, however bizarre, extreme or disgraceful, comes as a surprise. Which is presumably why no one is claiming to be surprised, or even moved to comment, by the latest (quiet) revelation that Grampian Police are investigating the finances of Enterprise Music Scotland and that its chief executive has hurriedly resigned.

EMS receives £213,000 a year from the Scottish Arts Council to support small-scale performances of music throughout the highways and byways. A glance at its website will tell you it's not exactly on top of its job. As I write this, the website is inviting applications for assistance in the 2004/5 season and proudly announcing publication of its 2004 directory. It also invites you to contact the Chief Executive, Mr Ronnie Rae. But were you to do so you'd be out of luck. Mr Rae is busy helping Grampian Police with their inquiries.

Meanwhile the Scottish Arts Council, now very curiously run by the ex-Bishop of Edinburgh, the Rt Rvd Richard Holloway, has nothing to say about the matter or about the amount of money which has gone astray. The whole thing, says the SAC, is *sub judice*. Which is no comfort to the musical community of Scotland who've been held to ransom through the past year while their politicians tell them, in so many words, we can't afford you. Hence, among other calamities, the collapse of Scottish Opera, which is now "dark" and won't be running any proper shows until next spring.

Whatever the losses sustained by EMS, this new scandal comes hot on the heels of £600,000 wasted by the Scottish Executive on setting up a Culture Commission to report on the crisis in artistic life north of the border. After 12 months' work the commission's report has now been published – and rejected wholesale by the Scottish Parliament which doesn't like any of its findings. Still more money down the drain.

One needs a robust memory to recall that on St Andrew's Day 2003 the First Minister Jack McConnell made a speech promising to put culture at the heart of Scottish life.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Herceptin

Sir,

So, drugs shouldn't be hastily judged? Too bad you do it yourself. The international trials data showed a reduction in deaths of nearly a quarter, which amounted to four percentage points, not the four percent you state (do find someone numerate to explain the difference). Furthermore, the data was based on a one year median follow-up and so was not a "difference at four years". Since you obviously don't do numbers, this means that half the women had been followed up for less than a year.

The reason that both breast cancer patients and oncologists started pressing for herceptin over the summer was that it was not expected to become available on the NHS until 2008, as much as two years after the trial results had been published. NICE consideration (not guaranteed approval) will still follow the publication of results by a few months. Furthermore, the Secretary of Health about the same time introduced faster consideration for drugs with the potential to increase life-expectancy, not just fight breast cancer. A government official actually responding to what people want and need. What an outrage!

Grumpily yours,
CHRISTINE HARLEN,

Via email.

● See Doing the Rounds, page 10.

SEN sensibility

Sir,

The Eye is quite right that all three political parties have ruthlessly connived at stripping out the nation's special educational needs infrastructure (not least in Wandsworth) under the Government's Potemkin policy of "inclusion". This has been a disaster alike for many thousands of SEN children, and for mainstream education which has not been equipped (and in many cases has been de-equipped) for dealing with them.

Your report is, however, entirely unfair to David Cameron who shortly after taking up the post of Shadow Secretary for Education set up a commission on special educational needs, which has yet to be convened. If Cameron helps to expose these sado-ideological policies for what they are it will be a serious political achievement.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN STONE (SEN PARENT),

Via email.

Capital ideas

Sir,

Mr Giesbrecht (Eye 1143) is unduly harsh to you, classicists or not. The Competition Commission would not want any company to make less than its cost of capital, and your article did not claim that it would. But in a (regulator's) ideal world, all companies would make exactly their cost of capital and not a penny more. More than that is deemed "excess profits" and, along with price discrimination and certain other indicators, is seen by economists as evidence of imperfect competition.

I DID do classics. It taught me to read other people's sentences with care.

Yours sincerely,
GREGORY WILSDON,

Richmond, Surrey.

Blind faith

Sir,

I am no apologist for pornographer Richard Desmond, but you can do better than the rather sixth-form masturbatory report on page 5 of issue 1143.

If a man, even one owning businesses with a questionable moral compass, supports a genuinely good cause, and does so with honest intent to be helpful (which one assumes is the case here), then even he deserves not to be accused of causing people physical injury, as you do with your "hilarious" comment based so clearly on an unscientific and ignorant old saw.

Yours in blind faith,
MARK FLEMING,

Via email.

Lookalike

Model

Cameron

Sir,

While watching Blue Peter today, I was surprised how this model of David Cameron looked so much like Marie Antoinette.

ALEX,

Torquay.

In the shit

Sir,

Southern Water are indeed in a hurry to build a new sewage works for Brighton (In the Back, 1143). This is because they are daily vilified for not having built it and for polluting the sea off Brighton with the sewage produced by the local residents. There is also government pressure because the failure to construct the works leaves open a possible prosecution in Europe for failure to implement the urban wastewater directive.

However, it must be remembered that the site originally proposed (and incidentally it is that of the current works) was rejected leaving a few choices to be made. With this rejection it is only reasonable to consider the alternative sites even if they have already been rejected for whatever reason. (After all the planning process has just told you that you are wrong.)

Sadly for the NIMBYs of Peacehaven and everywhere else, there is no such thing as a sewage works in a water tight box that sits on the sea bed. Pushing for this is about as much sense as objecting to an airport on the grounds that it would be better if we all flew around on broomsticks. Also even if such a solution were viable, it would also have an environmental impact of its own.

As for the comments by MP Desmond Turner, he is in one breath railing at the delays in completing the project and on the other saying that the delay in obtaining consent is reasonable. Yes he does seem to be guilty of duplicity.

Yours in the sewage,
STEVE OXTOBY,

Leighton Buzzard.

The independent National Institute of Criminal Excellence (NICE) – which is responsible for recommending which drugs should be provided free to patients and which should not -

Cheshunt & Waltham Mercury

Scenes You Seldom See

"I can't stand their food and wine, but I find French people absolutely adorable"

Camera shy

Sir,

Chris Burmajster (Letters, Eye 1143) is being disingenuous in his assessment of the success of safety cameras, perhaps based on a faulty reading of the statistics. The 13 years to 2003 saw a 20% increase in road traffic. This has been accompanied by a 15% reduction in casualties generally, and more specifically a 40% decrease in fatal and serious casualties (Source – DfT Transport Trends 2004 edition). The period since 2003 has also seen a reduction in casualties.

Mr Burmajster asks why anybody is dying at all, given the supposed effectiveness of safety cameras. As a keen motorist, he is no doubt aware that drivers are well warned of the presence of the cameras, with signage and possibly warning devices. They are free to speed elsewhere, causing death and injury. And they do. Evidence that safety cameras improve safety where they are present was presented in a BMJ review in February this year: "Reductions in outcomes across studies ranged from 5% to 69% for collisions, 12% to 65% for injuries, and 17% to 71% for deaths in the immediate vicinity of camera sites."

Regards,
BEN JEFFERYS,

London.

Cheap shot

Sir,

I've been a loyal reader for too many decades to remember but, sadly, must cancel my subscription.

Your small, but not insignificant, spoof piece, yes I do realise, on the murdered 18-year-old Sally Anne Bowman, went beyond the limit of the best traditions of your organ. Seriously cheap shot!

You do realise you're going downhill, don't you?

Thanks for the memories.

PETER RICE,

Via email.

On his bike

Sir,

I surely am not the only one to notice that Mr Barnett, author of the diatribe against migrants in issue 1143 ("Welcome to Britain"), writes from Switzerland, and is therefore presumably himself an economic migrant, and moreover, given Switzerland's reputation as a tax haven, probably one who is depriving the taxpayer of more cash than any asylum seeker ever did?

PHILIP NICE (British economic migrant in Holland and proud of it – I got on my bike and looked for work),

Via email.

● *On sale now – 'Scenes You Seldom See' by Barry Fantoni. Call 0870 750 1712 or order online from www.private-eye.co.uk* ●

Bench mark

Sir,

Glad to see you castigating the Standard for its treatment of magistrates who are, as you state, largely volunteers who often have no choice but to take the action that they do, if that is all the law allows.

What a pity you didn't apply the same standards in your own organ when the blessed Paul Foot had his "Beak of the Week" column which treated magistrates in similar fashion for applying the poll tax laws.

STEPHEN NEVILLE,
Oldbury, W. Midlands.

Rubbish

Sir,

Re: Media News article, 1143. The concept of reporters having to take litter with them to cover stories about finding it on the streets of Britain is intriguing, but nevertheless, rubbish.

The claim in Private Eye (1143) was wrong and the misunderstanding which gave a breath of life to the story was cleared up with a local conversation long before your report was published.

The truth is that litter is a big problem in the UK and our viewers have been universally delighted with us for highlighting both the problem and the tremendous work being done to rid us of the blight. The individuals who misunderstood our actions now realise we did no wrong.

Kind regards,
JOHN WILLIAMS,
Head of News, ITV Wales.

Lookalike

Royle

Hussein

Sir,

You never see them in the same place at the same time...

Yours bemusedly,
CORRAN MCARTHUR,
Via email.

Photo opportunity

Sir,

With all the fuss in the papers about Asian bird flu, it would be nice to see a senior media figure attempting to reassure the public, perhaps by posing for photographs with an Asian bird. I wonder if you might have come across any evidence of such a selfless act?

Yours,
KERRY BUCKLEY,
Ipswich.

Knickers

Sir,

It seems that Victor Lewis-Smith and his spotter, Chris Mann, have been duped by a rather clever website. The Forget-Me-Not panties featured in Funny Old World, Eye 1143, supposedly containing a hidden GPS sensor to track your lady's movements, were actually made up. The website was an entry in the Contagious Media Showdown, a competition between websites designed to spark media interest; it seems they've been quite successful. I hate to inform you that this sort of technology isn't quite possible... yet.

DAN BARKER,
Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"There's a good twelve inches between the two red balls."
Snooker commentator, BBC
(Neil Douthwaite)

"You don't want Rooney to come in your box."
GRAEME LE SAUX
(Craig Walker)

"Wayne [Rooney] likes to play in the little hole behind me."
MICHAEL OWEN, Radio 5 Live
(Ian Metcalfe)

"Whatever anyone says about him [Wayne Rooney] is true."
ALAN SHEARER
(Tim Freeman)

"Paul [Makin] is a good guy; he puts his mouth where his face is."
DEREK THOMPSON, Talksport Radio
(Andy Warren)

A MAN is being sought by Police after he indecently exposed himself outside The Cock Pub in Old Lakenham.

Norwich Advertiser

There will be a Cookery Demonstration and an opportunity to see, try and buy some of the products. Tickets are £2.00 each which will include a glass of wine and nipples.

Village Pump, Blakemere

SOLUTIONS

"Nescafé: working in partnership to deliver great coffee solutions" – *coffee*

"Dunn-Line Coaches: Passenger Transport Solutions" – *coaches*

"SMH: Solutions in Mechanical Handling" – *forklift trucks*

"London Care Solutions: Comprehensive Care Programmes for Adolescents" – *children's homes*

"Cyclone Mobility Disabled Solutions" – *wheelchairs*

"Storage solutions: 4 solutions designed for A4 paper, C4 envelopes, notepads and A3 paper" – *plastic boxes*

All submitted by readers

Costing free speech

Sir,

I take objection to Terry Memko's letter (Conspiracy Theory, Eye 1143). He describes plain political activism as "conspiracy theory" and the subsequent reporting analysis of it "anti-semitic" (sic).

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, used his position to call for a boycott of The Death of Klinghoffer stating: "I would hope that the people of Edinburgh would respond appropriately by allowing these moral midgets to do their opera to an empty house". Rabbi Cooper, like anyone, is allowed to engage in acts of activism and to encourage activism in others. He called for a boycott of the opera hoping it would have a measurable effect on ticket sales, it is as simple as that. Jewish people must be permitted to engage in political activism without their efforts being slurred "conspiratorial". I strongly disagreed with his call for boycott and attended the opera, but there is nothing illegitimate or conspiratorial about his request. Personally I doubt it was the comments of Cooper that kept audience members at bay, my suspicions rest on the formidable expense of attending – it cost me over fifty quid, the price of half a dozen Fringe shows.

If Terry wishes to maintain the value of the term "anti-Semite", he should restrict the usage to labelling actual racists, not those who simply hold a different worldview to him. I urge Terry to read "Beyond Chutzpah: On The Misuse Of Anti-Semitism" by Professor Norman Finkelstein of Chicago University, I think he will find it particularly illuminating.

M. GREENHOUSE,
Edinburgh.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

A know-all writes...

Sir,

Doubtless one of thousands of emails you will receive about this, but heigh-ho. Whilst not wishing to endorse 5 Live's abysmal arts coverage, I am afraid that the phrase "bugger all" is not entirely appropriate to describe the relationship between Massenet's opera "Manon" and Pagnol's book "Manon des Sources". The character Manon in "Manon des Sources" is named after her opera singer mother's favourite role, that of Manon in Massenet's opera of the same name.

So ner.

Yours etc,
RICHARD WALLEY,
Via email.

Letter from **Brasilia**

from Our Own Correspondent

PROMISING not to resign or commit suicide hardly instils confidence in your president, but it counts as a positive affirmation in the quagmire that is Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's first term in office.

Since the scandal broke in June of his party paying regular monthly backhanders to allies, Lula has seen the corruption slime creep ever closer to his once-saintly feet. Congress is paralysed by parliamentary inquiries into the minutiae of who-paid-who and who-knew-what, broadcast live practically round-the-clock.

The scandal has spawned some magical moments. At the height of the tragi-comedy, an aide to the party president's brother was found at an airport with US$100,000 in his underpants; then, 48 hours later, the politician president of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God tried to board a plane claiming that his eight suitcases, stuffed with the equivalent of US$6m, were merely donations from the party faithful he had yet to bank.

The clown prince of the affair is Roberto Jefferson, leader of the small Labour Party whose original accusations sparked the mudslide. A heroic whistleblower to some, Jefferson's theatricals included singing a samba tune at the end of one marathon witness session and claiming his enormous black-eye was due to a falling cabinet – which, in a way, it was.

Gone are the Workers' Party's general secretary, treasurer, party president and, most important of all, Lula's right-hand man and de facto prime minister, Jose Dirceu, previously renowned for returning in secret from training with guerrillas in Cuba during the dictatorship with a surgically-altered face. He kept his identity hidden from everyone, including his new wife, for five years.

This is Brazil's worst crisis since President Fernando Collor de Mello fled to Miami during an impeachment hearing in 1992 over billions missing from government coffers. And who was Collor's right-hand man at the time? Step forward whistle-blowing hero Roberto Jefferson!

Unlike the slightly-insane Collor and our previous presidential suicide case Getulio Vargas, Lula has remained popular despite officially losing his effective propaganda guru Duda Mendonca – responsible for such election winners as "Lula: Peace & Love" – to his illegal predilection for cock-fighting.

Though Lula's party has admitted that his 2002 election campaign was paid from millions in an undeclared bank account, the I-word, impeachment, isn't likely to feature before the 2006 re-election campaign. This is not because of Lula's complete innocence of brown suitcase activity (inflation here means bungs no longer fit in an envelope), but because impeachment would let in his deputy – the normally mute textile magnate Jose Alencar.

Mute, that is, until now. Alencar has caused jitters by saying he would be ready to take the helm of the republic and announced that he would reverse monetary policy. "The current economic policy is a continuation of what we inherited but we campaigned against it," says the millionaire businessman – a contrast to Lula, the ex-shoeshine boy, metal-worker, strike-leading firebrand and working class hero with his neo-liberal model.

The daily drip-drip of corruption has all but washed out news of what our press calls the "execution in London" of Jean Charles de Menezes. (Even our most respected daily, the *Folha de Sao Paulo*, tags the war in Iraq the "attack of the imperials".)

While the Brazilian mission sent to London complained of "questionable behaviour" by your Met police, no such scrutiny was focused on the seven homeless people murdered on the streets of Sao Paulo last year or the 30 victims of the worst massacre in Rio de Janeiro's history in March – both committed by our own dear rozzers.

Over the past 20 years the nationwide daily murder rate has averaged 82. But help avoiding the daily shoot-outs is at hand: one of the main thoroughfares in central Rio, the Red Line, will have eight new neon signs to warn motorists of gun battles ahead.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "Yes, we all know what our town's name means in English," Mayor Siegfried Hauppl told reporters in his Austrian village near Salzburg, "but we didn't give it a second thought until tourists started stealing the road signs. So many signs have been stolen recently that we even had a vote last year on whether to rename the town, but eventually decided to keep it as it is. After all, Fucking has existed for 800 years, and will probably exist for another 800, but only if British tourists stop stealing our Fucking signs."

"The village probably got its name in the twelfth century, when a Mr Fuck or the Fuck

family moved into the area, and the 'ing' was added as a word for settlement. We have a butcher called Herr Fuck working here to this day. Residents first found out about the English meaning of the word at the end of World War II, when British and American soldiers were stationed in the area, and at first we didn't mind the jokes. A lot of tourists come here to pose for photos in front of the signs, and if they spend some money in the area, we're happy to see them. But we're fed up with having to replace the signs again and again, because thoughtless people keep ripping them down and taking them home as souvenirs."

Franz Duernsteiner, an expert on Austrian village names, added that "the residents of Fucking are actually very conservative people. Most of them can speak English, and when someone asks them where they come from, they are often a little ashamed to pronounce the word. Residents of two other Austrian communities, Windpassing and Wank on the Lake, suffer a similar reluctance." *(Cape Argus, 19/8/05. Spotter: Tim Minogue)*

– ● –

● *"A dirty spot today can be a tourist attraction tomorrow," Councillor Lam Kit-sing told a government committee meeting in Hong Kong, "but only if we have imagination. Cheung Chau has an unsavoury reputation as a suicide spot, and people don't want to visit the island, because they regard it as a bad place, haunted by evil spirits. But what would happen if we think in an innovative way? We could turn that notoriety into a unique selling point, by boasting about its reputation for self-inflicted death, and opening the world's first suicide theme park there."*

Warming to his theme, Lam added that "next month sees the opening of Hong Kong's Disneyland, which will attract millions of people to the main island. Just suppose that we created a similar attraction on Cheung Chau, a macabre ghost-town theme park based around the theme of suicide. We could dare people to spend the night in a haunted apartment, and take them on tours showing different ways of committing suicide, from simple methods like jumping off a cliff or taking pills, to more exotic methods, like hanging or ritual disembowelling. We could reproduce famous suicides in history, and even sell lottery tickets, betting on the number of people who will kill themselves on the island over the next month. It may sound morbid, but Cheung Chau needs to capitalise on its grisly reputation, and be proud that it is the island of choice for Chinese people who want to end it all."

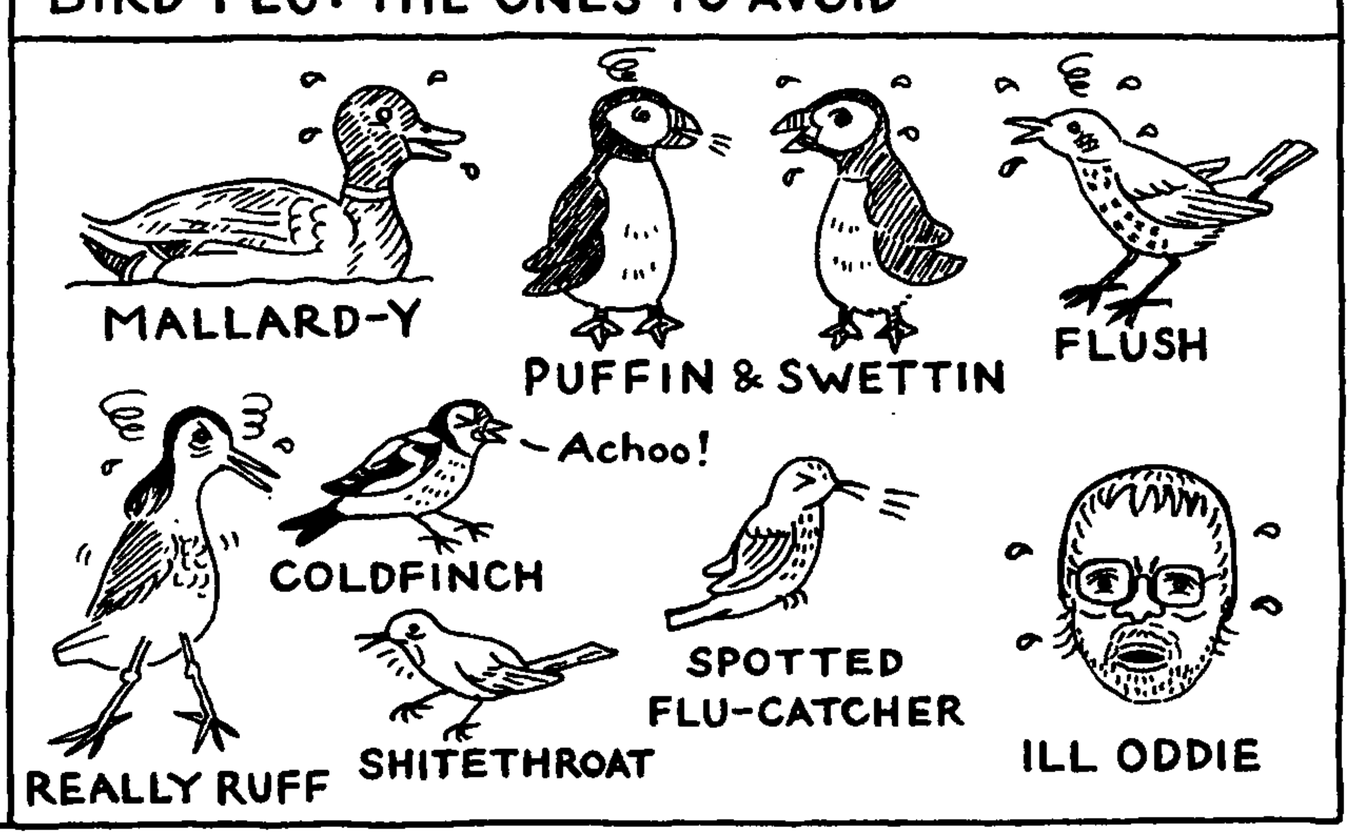
After a brief discussion, Lim's proposal was voted down by the council. (The Borneo Post, 10/8/05. Spotter: Steven Burgner)

– ● –

● "Although it's pretty accurate, the Jerk-o-Meter isn't a foolproof method for rating telephone callers," Anmol Madan of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology admitted to reporters, "and I see it more as a tool for self-improvement. It's hard for people to get feedback about how they sound on the phone, so my invention could be a boon for them, by telling them if they're sounding bored or uninterested in the conversation. If used correctly, I'm sure my invention could prevent many of those unexpected arguments that suddenly flare up when two people are talking on the phone."

Madan was demonstrating the prototype of his Jerk-o-Meter, a device that monitors telephonic speech for signs of emotion. "People tend to recognise emotions like happiness, anger, irritation, or disgust from facial expressions, rather than vocal inflections, so it's hard to pick up on them during a phone conversation. My Jerk-o-Meter analyses speech patterns, rates your level of engagement from 0 to 100, and sends you visual messages like 'be a little nicer now' or 'don't be a jerk!' so you can adjust your level of commitment. If you're the sort who taps away on a keyboard while you're on the phone, this invention could alert you that the other person is starting to lose interest or get angry, so you can remedy the situation before it's too late. It also analyses the other person's voice, and if they're not paying attention, it can send you a message like 'this person is acting like a jerk!' and encourage you to hang up." *(National Geographic News, 7/9/05. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*

Apparently BY MIKE BARFIELD



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo,

Which, by the way, is my catch-phrase, although you've probably been hearing rather a lot of it lately from a certain young parishioner who's taken it into his head that he's me!

I think his name is David Something-or-other, and you've probably seen him hanging around outside the new Tesco's (formerly the St Albion's Cottage Hospital), handing out leaflets and telling people about his "Third Way"!

And you're not going to believe this, he's even claiming that he's the rightful vicar!

And what's really sad about this chap, Something Cameron I think he calls himself, is that he stands there like an idiot, smiling a lot and trying to ingratiate himself with everyone by using matey phrases, such as "look", "hey" and even "hullo".

Hey look, I don't want to be judgemental, but this poor young man clearly needs help!

And the way he parades his wife and toddler around the parish is, frankly, sickening!

Goodness me, what would people in the parish think if I started sending out Christmas cards with pictures of my wife and children on them?

I can tell you, Cherie and little Leo would never forgive me!

Can I just tell you a short story at this point? I was giving little Leo a bath the other night, giving Cherie a well-earned night off in Kuala Lumpar where she'd been invited to sign copies of the Malaysian edition of her wonderful book about life in the vicarage.

And you know what he said to me? "Daddy, I'm so pleased that you've made time to give me the benefit of your parenting skills, one of which of course is guarding my privacy."

Bless! "Out of the mouths of babes," as

it says in the New Labour Bible, "you shall hear some really great stuff about the vicar" *(Book of Sudoku)*.

But back to our poor deluded friend Mr Cameron. I don't want to go on about him, but at the end of the day, you know, he just talks in platitudes!

I've tried to listen to him, but, frankly, it's all a lot of empty nonsense! Verbal candyfloss!

I mean, he stands there with a vacuous grin on his face, and just parrots the same old phrases again and again, about being "modern", "moving on" and "drawing a line" under things!

Well that's probably enough about our pitiful little would-be preacher. The best thing we can all do with that sort of person is draw a line and move on!

Yours,

Tony

Parish Transport

Dr Reid Writes:

Some people have been complaining about the vicar's wife driving around St Albion in a tank paid for out of parish funds.

Get real! We live in a violent world and there are a lot of people who have got it in for the vicar's wife. £2 billion is a small price to pay for the knowledge that Cherie can pop out to the shops to buy a free dress without putting her life at risk.

So let's hear no more about this supposed "luxury tank" and I would warn any whingers to keep out of her way, as they may find themselves being run over by a very heavy armoured vehicle.

Get my drift, Jimmy?!

St Albion's Man Of The Week

CONGRATULATIONS to Mr Byers for having the decency and honesty to admit that he had done nothing wrong when he told a lie to the PCC!

If only all our parishioners could be as courageous as Stephen in admitting they have done nothing wrong! Food for thought, eh? T.B.

PS. Congratulations also to Mrs Hewitt, who has now admitted that she did nothing wrong in giving an important parish appointment to a woman, even though a much better-qualified man was available. I adopted exactly the same policy when I appointed Mrs Hewitt! T.B.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE POND!

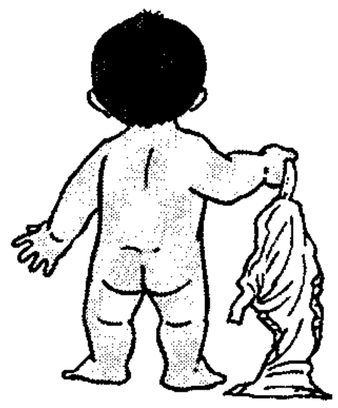
The head of our mission overseas, Mr Straw, has been on an extended evangelical visit to Sister Condi's Alabama Crusade. As you all know, Sister Condi is a leading light in Reverend Dubya's Church of the Latter-Day Morons and she could be the first female black Moron to lead the Tabernacle!

So what a good thing that Jack has spent so much time there joining in prayer, breaking bread and banging the tambourine along to such gospel favourites as 'Shall We Bomb Them By The River', 'When The Troops Go Marching In' and 'Glory, Glory, Alledubya'.

This is a much better use of Jack's time than hanging around in the parish, going to meetings and doing his job. T.B.

Jack and Condi with some children!! Says Mr Straw "Don't worry, they are not mine. They're Blunketts".

CALLING ALL DADS!!



Great news for fathers! (writes Mr Blunkett). Our new plan for giving all fathers time off to look after their newborn children is proving hugely popular. We have long since moved on from the days when mums could be expected to stay at home looking after their little ones, thus wasting their valuable workplace skills. Now dads will be free to play their proper part, as mothers to their children, instead of wasting their valuable parenting skills sitting round in the workplace. And, guess what? The Vicar is right behind our new scheme! Only the other day, he said to me, "Six months paternity leave with each child? I rather doubt whether we'll ever see you at work again, David!"

Nice one, Tony! D.B.

● *On sale now – St Albion Parish News Book Eight "Vicar on the Spot!". Call 0870 750 1712 or order online from www.private-eye.co.uk* ●

BIRD FLU

Your Questions Answered

Are we all going to die?

Yes and no. On the one hand, the strain of flu virus called BNP 94 is highly contagious and can spread from chicken to human, leading to instant death. But there is no likelihood that this will happen in Britain. Unless it does.

But what would happen if it did happen?

At the moment, all the evidence shows that in its present form, WD40 cannot be transmitted from birds to cattle (or vice versa). If it did, it would create a pandemic which would kill more people than the great Belgian flu outbreak in 1903.

Should we kill all birds before it's too late?

The answer to this one is yes and no. Yes, I'm not sure, and no, I haven't a clue.

© *An expert.*

NEW LABOUR PROVERB

"All work and no pensions will make everyone very dull indeed"

Blunkett's Ten-Point Pension Plan In Full

THE Minister for Works and Pensions has unveiled his new ten-point plan to ensure a financially secure old age for working men and dogs.

1. No one should be sacked, regardless of their behaviour, however bad.

2. Even if they are sacked, they should be allowed their job back after a short interval.

3. During this interval they should be entitled to free housing in Belgravia and receive a five-figure sum of their choice as compensation.

4. Also during this period they should be allowed to join the board of dodgy firms run by Arab businessmen, thus enabling them to put away a nest egg for their old age.

5. Will you marry me and have my babies? *(How did this get in? Ed.)*

Miss Take

Sven-Goran Jonsson
|
Boris Johansson
|
Stanley Johansson
|
Scarlet Johansson
|
Ingmar Bergman-Johnson
|
Uri Gellersohn
|
Eureka Archimedes
|
Ulrika Jonsson

How They Aren't Related Any More

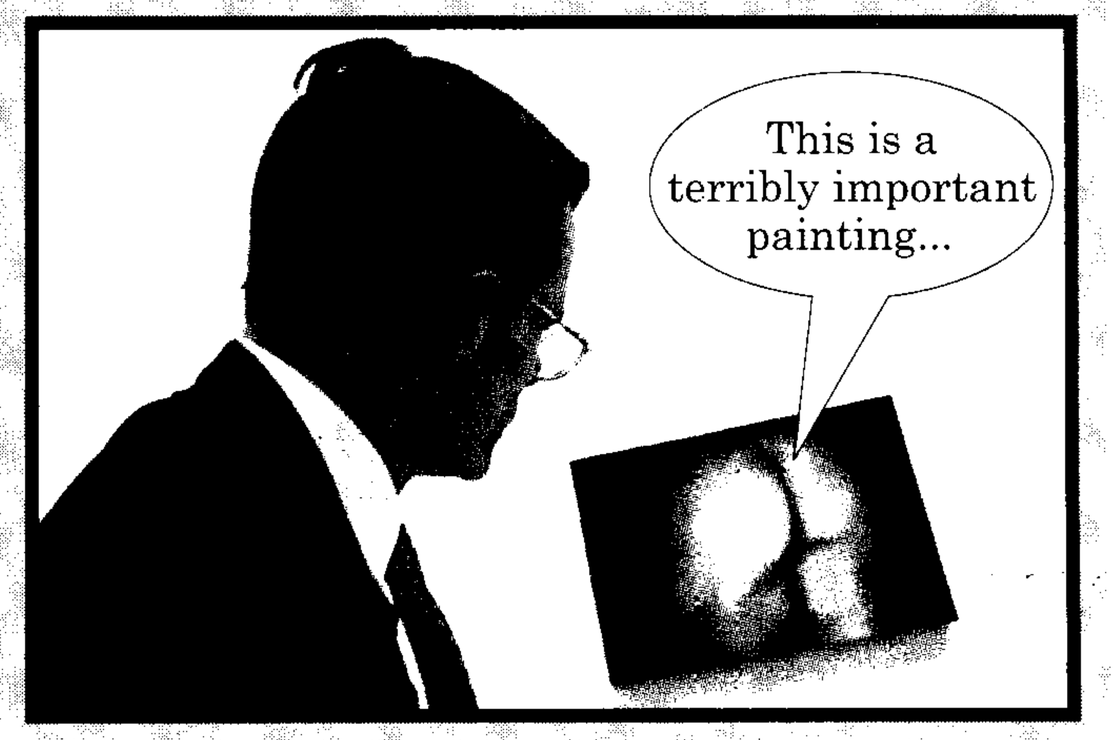
Mr Wrong

The Wright Brothers
|
Gerards of Bond Street
|
Brigadier Gerard
|
Lance Percival
|
Lance-Corporal Jones
|
Boris Joneson
|
Gerard Scarfe
|
Lance Gerard-Wright

THE WEEK IN PICTURES

GREEN AWARDS HIMSELF A £1.2bn BONUS

TURNER PRIZE FOR MODERN ARSE



BLAIRS ATTEND THATCHER'S 80th PARTY

'I'M NOT GOING TO ANSWER THAT' Says Man You've Never Heard Of

by Our Political Staff
Peter O'Bore

THE BIG EYE INTERVIEW

WHO is he, this man that everyone's talking about but no one has heard of?

The Eye can exclusively reveal that the biggest and newest star in Britain's political firmament is called David Cameron.

He is young, compassionate, charismatic, compassionate and very much a moderniser.

He represents a new generation of Conservatives who are young, compassionate, modernisers and, above all, compassionate.

I was privileged to be the only journalist in the last five minutes to be granted an exclusive interview with the next Tory leader in his £8 million home in Ladbroke Grove.

He sat at his kitchen table, looking relaxed and compassionate.

He makes a cup of Nescafe with the practised ease of a compassionate father and husband who is entirely at home in his own kitchen.

Leaning forward in a rumpled pullover that can only be described as compassionate, David spoke frankly to me about why he refuses to speak frankly about anything at all.

"There are certain things," he told me frankly, "that the public has no right to know – such as what my policy is on anything at all.

"People can say 'tax', 'asylum seekers' and 'Europe' to me as often as they like, but there are certain things that a chap is perfectly entitled to keep to himself."

At this point we were joined by his lovely wife Sam, as if on cue. "Was this when you wanted me to come in?" she asked with a disarming and compassionate smile.

"Yes, darling," he responded in an equally relaxed and compassionate manner.

"Obviously," he went on, "there are questions I'm only too happy to answer, such as 'Are you very compassionate?' And I don't mind admitting that, yes, I am. Wouldn't you say so, darling?"

His lovely wife consulted her notes and answered after only a slight pause, "Yes, you are, darling. And it also says here that you are a moderniser."

"I'm glad you brought that up," says David, "because that's something I feel very passionate about. We cannot stand still. We have to find new ways of moving forward, to build a Britain that is both modern and compassionate."

And with that, the Tory's new star leads me out of the kitchen and into the hallway, where he greets the next journalist who has been waiting for an exclusive interview.

Truly I felt that this was the man who is equipped to lead the Tory Party out of the wilderness and into oblivion. *(Surely 'a bright new tomorrow'? Ed.)*

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

IS THIS THE PICTURE THAT COULD DESTROY TOP TORY'S LEADERSHIP BID FOREVER?

THE FIGURE in the foreground is only too familiar. It is Lord "Norma" Lamont, depicted at the very moment when his career was about to crash in ruins on the infamous 'Black Wednesday' which destroyed the Tory Party for ever.

But at this moment of his disgrace, who is the shadowy figure caught skulking in the background, as if the greatest catastrophe in the history of British politics was nothing to do with him?

It is none other, we can reveal, than current Tory white hope David Cameron, who had become intimately involved with the seedy 'Paddington Prowler', known as 'Mr Pain', only a year or two before.

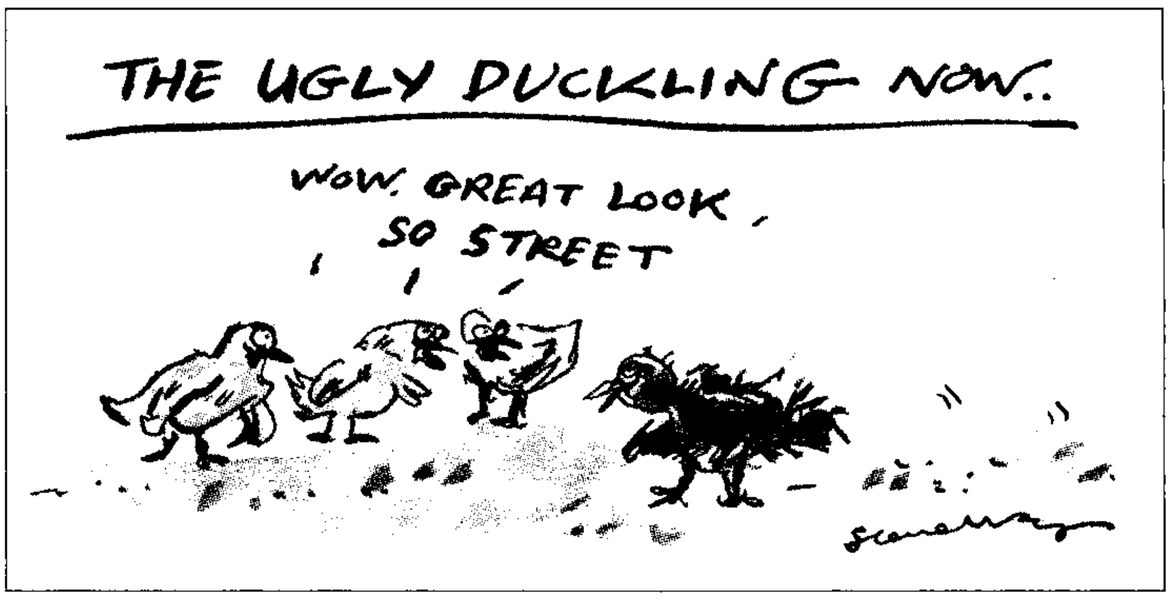
"I have nothing to be ashamed of," said Mr Cameron last night. "It was all a long time ago, and it was the sort of thing we've all done in our younger days – plunging the country into misery and recession."

Can Mr Cameron possibly survive the humiliation and shame of his association with one of the most notorious low-life characters of the 1990s?

ALSO EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

Why David Cameron Is Such A Breath Of Fresh Air For The Conservatives

1. He's got hair...
2. ...lovely thick wavy hair...
3. Have you seen his hair?
4. ...it's very nice...
5. Er...
6. That's it.



Who Are They – The Cameron Set That Everyone Calls 'The Camikazes'?

(Surely 'Macaroons'? Ed.)

David 'Dave' Cameron, 27, Eton-educated, PR high-flyer for Croydon TV (producers of 'Good Morning, Croydon', 'Good Evening, Croydon' and 'Good Night, Croydon').

Samantha 'Sam' Cameron (née Fox), 25, gorgeous, pouting, ex-page 3 girl. Daughter of Scunthorpe baronet Sir Edward Fox, chairman of Fox's Glacier Mints, she now runs the swish Bond Street stationery shop Posh Post-Its.

Basil Brush, 35, high-flying 'TV fox' and leading light of influential Tory dining club, the 'Boom-Booms'.

George O'Borne, 25, high-flying shadow spokesman for paperclips, son of the carpet magnate Sir Francis Underlay.

Michael 'Go Go' Gove, 21, high-flying former Times columnist, now MP for Notting Hill South, Gove provides the "intellectual backbone" for the Cameroons.

Tarquin de Vere Cameron, 41, high-flying second cousin of Dave Cameron (and fifth cousin once-removed of Sam Fox). "Tarqui the Rotter", as he is known, works for Sotheby's in the Oriental Ceramics Department, coming in at 10.30am clutching a cappuccino from Pret A Manger and saying, "Cripes, bit of a heavy night last night".

(That's enough people you've never heard of. Ed.)

"I see you have a very privileged background..."

CAMERON REFUSES TO DISCUSS 'CONTROVERSIAL PAST'

by Our Leadership Correspondent **Simon Spliffer**

LAST NIGHT top Tory leadership hopeful David Cameron again refused to be drawn into discussing events which he said "all happened a long time ago".

When asked by Andrew Marr "Were you at Eton?", Mr Cameron merely smiled and replied, "Like many others I had a normal educational experience."

When pressed by Marr to admit that this involved "top hats, tails, fancy waistcoats and fags", Cameron was evasive.

Weed

"Look, it's time to move on. What I did or didn't do at school has no bearing on my ability to take drugs (*surely 'lead the party'? Ed*).

GLENDA SLAGG

PRIVATE EYE'S NEW POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT!

■ ARE THE Tories stark raving bonkers!?!? They must be, to drop the one man who could actually win an election against Tony and Gordon!!?!

Ken Clarke, I'm talkin' about, stoopid!?!! The Freddie Flintoff of modern politics and the only man who can hit Tony and Gordon for six!!?! *(You've done this bit. Ed.)* Who says he's too old for the job?! Winston Churchill was over 100 when World War Two broke out. And nobody said he should stay at home by the fire with his slippers and his pension book!?!

Ken is an ordinary bloke, from his trademark cigar right down to his Hush Puppies!?! And he's been around long enough to kick Tony and Gordon into touch any day of the week!?! *(I said you've done this bit. Ed.)*

Yet what did they do?! The future saviour of the Tory Party was shown the door!? Shame on you!!? You deserve to lose!!?

■ THANK GAWD!?! The Tories have shown some sense at last – by giving the heave-ho to Fatso Ken, along with his stinkin' cigar and his has-been Hush Puppies!?!

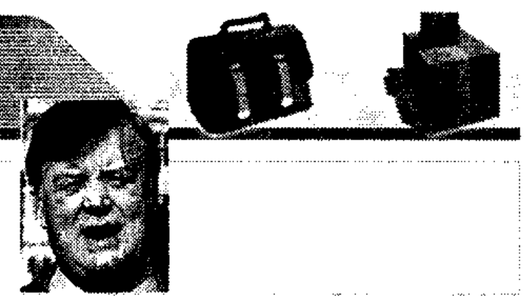
Talk about the day before yesterday's man!!?! 65?!!? You look more like 165!!!?

Time to go home and sit by the fire with your slippers and your pension book, and listen to your rotten old jazz records.

Fag off, Ken!!?! (Geddit?)

■ *GLENDA'S Top 10 Tories: Sorry guys, there's only one!!?! **David Cameron** – mmmmm!?!*

TOMORROW: Glenda's 10-point plan for solving Britain's pension crisis.



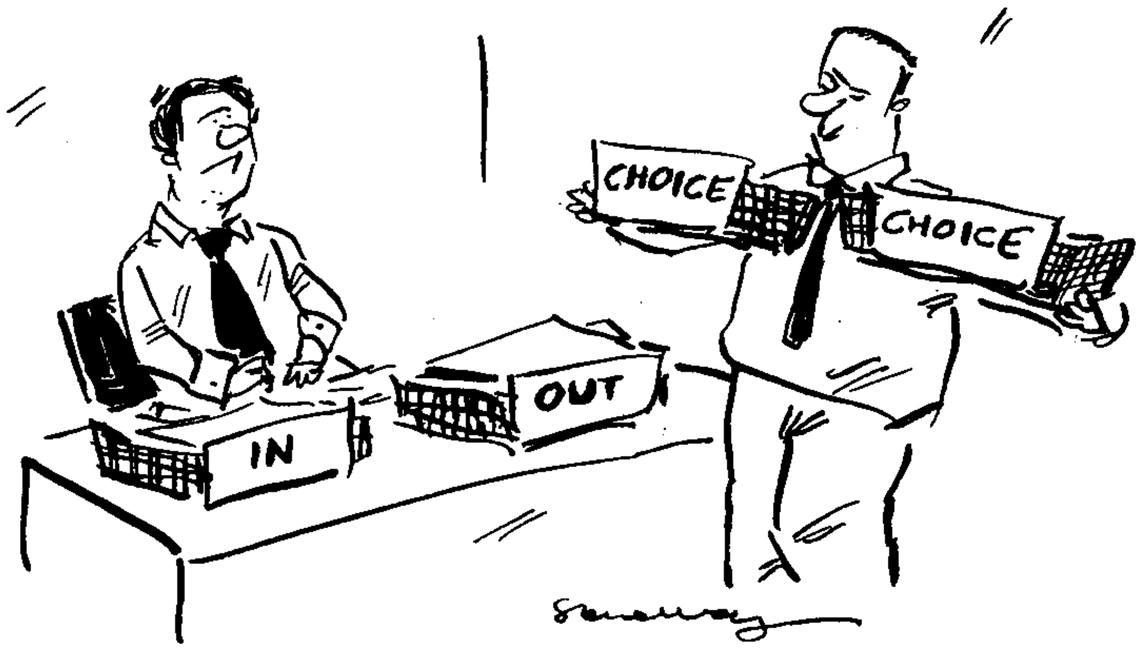
tucky-fried (38)

Items I'm Bidding On (1-5 of 5 items)

	Current Price	Postage Cost	Bids
☐ **"Singin' the Blues" – set of 3 jazz CDs**	£9.99	£2.99	1
☐ **"Brew Your Own" home kits – stout and bitter**	£4.99	£2.99	1
☐ **100ml. suede cleaning solution – tackles ketchup, mustard, curry sauce, etc.**	£19.99	£4.00	1
☐ **Old-fashioned case for cigarettes – several holes, backing gone, tarnished, unhinged**	£8.99	£2.00	1
☐ **Travel book "Europe From £70 A Day" – multi-language edition**	£4.99	£2.50	1

Items I'm Selling (1-4 of 4 items)

	Current Price	Postage Cost	Bids
☐ **"Slim-Fast" meal replacement course, 2 doz. tins – box still sealed**	£11.99	£3.50	0
☐ **Men's smart 2-piece suit – black, pinstripe, dbl. breasted, W46" L30" – new, never worn**	£49.99	£10.00	0
☐ **Set of car number plates – KC 4PM – genuine reason for sale**	£59.99	£10.00	0
☐ **Box of 6 fine "Coronacion" cigars – vintage, full-bodied – unopened**	£29.99	£4.00	0



"These replace your existing trays..."

Daily Mail

COMMENT

IT IS an utter outrage that the BBC have made a debauched new historical epic, 'Rome', and yet they are only releasing two pictures of a naked woman to accompany our article condemning the drama.

If we are to label the sex-laden drama properly as nothing but unmitigated filth, we need at least half a dozen pictures of *(cont. p. 94)*

"Trick or treat?"

RADIO FOUR DISCUSSION ROW SHOCKS LISTENERS

by Our Radio Four Correspondent **Libby Perverse**

RADIO FOUR listeners were shocked this week during an episode of Midweek when Darcus Howe accused comedian Joan Rivers of making comments of an "interesting" nature.

"I know it's hard to believe, but I stand by my allegation that Joan said something interesting and she must be brought to account for it," alleged Howe. "I was sitting there, droning on about racism and colonialism as usual, and she said something interesting about me deserting my wife and kids *(cont. p. 94)*

Exclusive to Private Eye

POETRY CORNER

Lines Written To Commemorate The Award Of The Nobel Prize For Literature 2005 To Myself by *Harold Pinter O.M.*

So. They have given me
The Nobel Prize
For Literature.

That'll show that
Fucking bastard Bush
And his warmongering
Friend Blair.

Wankers.

© H. Pinter, Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize 2006

Prize For World's Greatest Living Playwright

BY OUR LITERARY EDITOR
ROBERT MCCRUMMY

With his latest honour, Harold Pinter joins the pantheon of the greatest writers the world has ever known.

His name now stands alongside such giants of literature as Arne Jokullsson, the Icelandic poet whose epic 20-volume saga, *The Voyage of Moomot*, won him the ultimate accolade in 1943; Sanjit Hatterjee, who won the prize in 1921 for his celebrated Bombay trilogy *Rajput And the Elephant*; and Luigi Umbrello, the Italian Post-Surrealist playwright, winner in 1959 for his still-unperformed play *Six Swedish Bores In Search Of An Author To Give A Prize To.*

News in Brief

FOOTBALLER NOT ACCUSED OF RAPE SHOCK

STUNNING news emerged last night when it was revealed that a woman hadn't accused a footballer of raping her.

A police spokesman said: "The woman in question claims she went out on a date with a soccer player who afterwards walked her home to her apartment, where he subsequently kissed her goodnight."

BIRD FLU – '750,000 ARTICLES NOT IMPOSSIBLE'

IT HAS been revealed that the possibility of a bird flu pandemic could result in three-quarters of a million pieces being written on the subject in Britain alone.

BLAIR: TORIES ARE COPYING LABOUR

PRIME MINISTER Tony Blair has accused the Conservatives of copying New Labour in their bid to modernise the party.

A spokesman for the PM said: "How dare the Tories steal the incumbent government's values in a desperate attempt to gain power – that's what *we* did last time."

NEW CRICKET ALLEGATIONS

THERE was shock today throughout Australia when a member of the Australian cricket team suggested that England won the recent Ashes series simply because they had played better cricket over the five Tests than the Australians.

"Surely it must've been because of Trebor Extra-Strong Mints, the sun being in our eyes, Halley's Comet distracting us, our dressing rooms being painted a depressing shade of grey," said an arrogant nation *(cont. p. 94)*

the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOLEY
PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLERS ASSOCIATION
JOHNNY HAYNES DIES
WHAT A LOSS, IT WAS THE P.F.A. WHO GOT THE MAXIMUM WAGE ABOLISHED IN 1961 MAKING JOHNNY'S WAGES RISE FROM £20 TO £100 A WEEK...
JUST THINK OF IT, IF IT WASN'T FOR THE P.F.A. PLAYERS TODAY WOULDN'T BE ASKING FOR £120,000 A WEEK!
AND CHELSEA COULDN'T GET THE BEST PLAYERS MEANING THE PREMIERSHIP'S SEWN UP!
THE RESULT THAT GATES ARE FALLING
AND THE OTHER MANAGERS ARE NOW SAYING ONLY THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE IS WORTH WINNING
YES BECAUSE WINNING THAT MEANS THEY'LL KEEP THEIR BEST PLAYERS AND WILL BE ABLE TO AFFORD THEIR WAGES!
OK, ENOUGH! ENOUGH!

Lines On The 200th Anniversary Of The Battle Of Trafalgar

by The Poet Laureate ***Andrew Motion***

I remember very well
When I was young
Being given a copy
(By my Dad)
Of The Ladybird Book
Of Lord Nelson.

It was really exciting
For a small boy
To read about him and
His famous ship
The Victory.

Now, all these years later,
I have been asked
To write a poem about him.
Quite a coincidence
When you think about it.
(Will this do? A.M.)

Read more great poems by Andrew Motion on his website www.offthebackofalaureate.com

A Doctor Writes

AS A doctor, I'm often asked, "Doctor, have I got Bird Flu?". The simple answer is "No".

"But, Doctor," the patient continues, "I've got all the symptoms – I'm sweating, shaking and feeling nauseous."

"That's because you've read too many articles about Bird Flu," I reply.

What happens is that the patient buys a newspaper in which there is a large piece saying, *'Bird Flu Killer – Millions Will Die'.*

This transmits itself neurologically to the brain where it begins to mutate into panic, hysteria and depression.

The worry is that this condition, or *Avianis fluensis apocalyptus* as it is known to medical experts, may spread from human to human until we reach a point where the entire population is infected, including myself. My advice is PANIC!!! WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE!!!

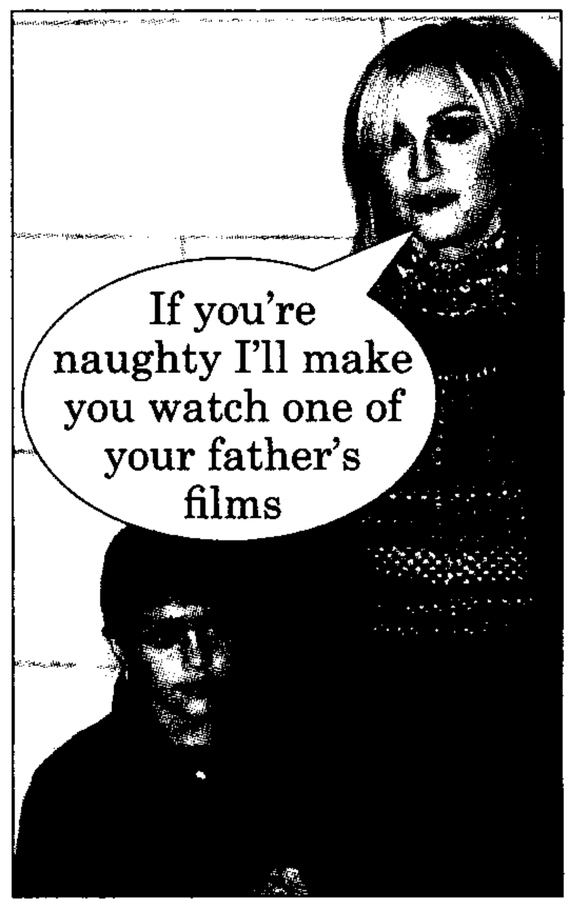
© A. Doctor.

Play All New Bird Flu Sudoku!

1		8	4	9		7		
2					6	9	8	
4		3			7		2	
		6	2	8				9
	5						4	
3				1	4	5		
	1		5			2		3
	3	9	7					8
		7		4	8	6		1

SIMPLY place any number at random into the grid above to produce a figure, and if it matches the number we've plucked out of the air and put onto our front page as our prediction as to how many people will die from a Bird Flu pandemic – you're a winner!

MADONNA'S STRICT PARENTING REGIME



A Taxi Driver writes

Every week a well-known cabbie is invited to give his views on an issue of national importance.

THIS WEEK: **Richard Littlejohn** (Digger Taxis no. 94) on why he has decided to switch to driving for another cab firm in December.

You're lucky to get me guv! I've had enough of this there's no money in it by the time you've paid for the diesel and the upkeep with all the licensing regs they lay down nowadays you won't see any change out of £200,000 and that won't buy you nothing no I'm jacking it in and joining Dacre's Dial-A-Cab they've offered me loads more money and with this lot there's no road tax or insurance to worry about and you don't even have to know where you're going. *Oi you! Get outa the cab lane!* Probably an asylum seeker in a hurry to collect his benefits – look at him in his clapped-out Vauxhall Cavalier! *Get back to Baghdad or wherever you bloody come from!* Sorry guv where is it you wanted to go? Paddington Station? Where is that again? It's not near Heathrow is it?

Next week: CHARLIE MOORE (Cab no. 50973): "Good old Maggie! They should never have let her go."

Prince William's Sandhurst Officer Training Admission Test in Full

Please answer the following multiple choice questions.

A score of one correct answer will be enough to successfully complete the paper.

Are you Prince William?

A. Yes ☐

B. No ☐

Turkey gives itself all-clear on bird flu

Eastern Daily Press

'DI'LY EXPRESS
The World's Greatest Newspaper BRITAIN DEFIANT FRIDAY OCTOBER 28, 2005

IS DIANA STILL ALIVE?

By Our Royal Staff **M. Fayed**

SENSATIONAL new evidence has come to light that Princess Diana was not murdered in Paris in 1997 by the Royal Family, as everyone has previously thought, but is still alive and living secretly on the front page of the Daily Express.

Said top Royal expert Mohammed Fayed, who has been investigating the Diana mystery for many years, "I will give you a lot of fugging money if you print this in your fugging paper."

Full story and pictures: 2-94.

JAMES BOND
You Decide
Who Do You Think Should Be The New Super-Sexy Spy?

- **DANIEL CRAIG** Sets women's hearts a-flutter!
- **DAVID CAMERON** Seduced a whole party in a weekend!
- **DAVID BLUNKETT** Licensed to flirt!
- **STEPHEN FRY** Bless!
- **WALLACE & GROMIT** Box office gold!
- **SIR PEREGRINE WORSTHORNE** O, O, seventy!

Just ring the Bond Hotline now on 007 007 007 (calls charged at £37.94 per minute) for your chance to choose the next leader of the Tory Party *(surely shome mishtake)*

POETRY CORNER

Lines On The 20th Anniversary Of The Birth Of Mr Wayne Rooney

So. Wayne
Rooney.
You are
20.

"Fuck off!"

That is your
Catchphrase.

E.J. Thribb (17½ shirt)

IN TODAY'S **EYE2**

Buying A Home In Croatia Eye2 4

My Six-Year-Old Won't Eat Broccoli Eye2 6

Emily Palmer Talks About Her New Film Eye2 9

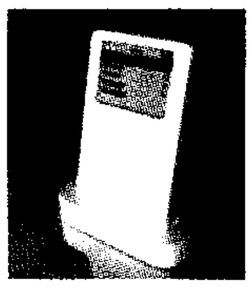
Money For Old Rope! How antique rope is fetching big money on ebay Eye2 110

PLUS

Best Buy – Eye2's Top 10 Trouser Press

All in Today's EYE2

Revolutionary new iPod launched



by our Science Correspondent Emma Pee-Three

THE COMPUTER giant Apple last night unveiled plans for an incredible new version of its best-selling iPod range which promises to turn the world of personal music systems on its head.

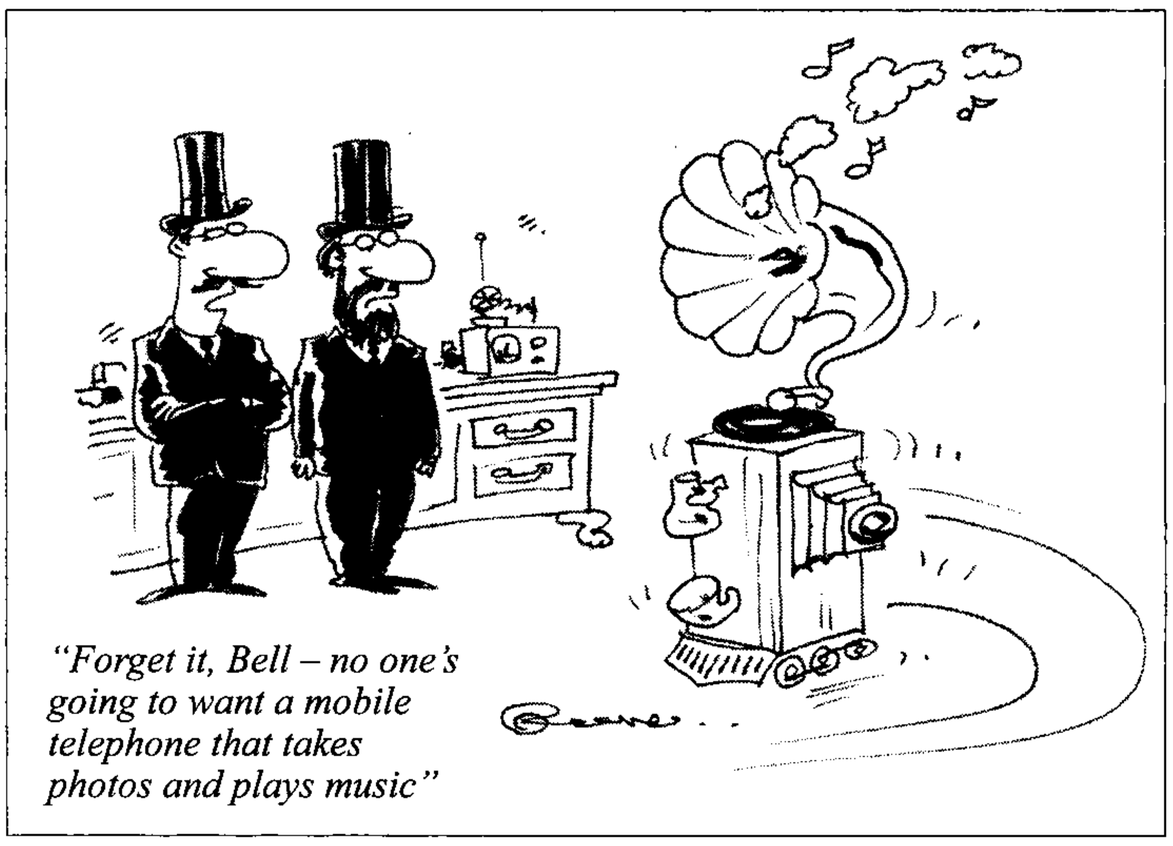
"This one actually works," said a spokesman "it doesn't freeze, crash, explode shortly after you buy it and, as an extra, the screen doesn't crack either."

Crapple

However reaction from iPod fans was less than enthusiastic.

"We like the classic version," one said, "with this new one you are going to spend all your time just listening to music rather than enjoying the full iPod experience, i.e. swearing, banging it on the table and ringing the helpline to be told that technical support costs £30 a call."

The new iPod, catchily called the 'iWorkproperly', is thought unlikely to catch on.



"Forget it, Bell – no one's going to want a mobile telephone that takes photos and plays music"

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

MY 24-HOUR BINGE DRINK HELL

by **Breakfastlunchanddinnertime O'Booze**

IT IS 4 o'clock in the morning and the barman is giving me drinks. I am in the Slug & Firkin in London's fashionable Neasden. This is my 500th drink but the barman is happy to keep serving me – even though I can barely stand up and my speech is rambling and slurred.

Make no mistake! This is Blair's Britain. And let's keep it that way *(surely "something must be done"? Ed)*.

© A. Hack. Exclusive

Nick Cohen
Science Correspondent

FOR MONTHS certain papers have been suggesting that there is a possible connection between alcohol and drunkenness. I say this – what utter tosh! I have been drinking all day and, as I sit down to write my column, there is no sign whatsoever that it has had any rhubarb on my trouserpress. Furthermore, I am going to sue anyone who says I am habitually drunk and that I cannot hold my custard *(cont. p. 94)*

© Nick Incoherent, The Absurder 2005.

DIARY

DAVID CAMERON: I joined the Conservative Party because I loved John Peel. I loved his character, his history, his role in the world. He understood, and was proud of, who we as a people have been, and who we are, and what we can continue to strive to be, both now and in the future.

John never said as much, but he was a great moderniser, with a tremendous love of youth. And I honestly believe that, deep down, he profoundly believed that the baton for the Conservative leadership would have to be passed to the younger generation, a generation of sympathetic young men in compassionate, well-cut suits. "This," he would have said, "is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. The Age of Aquaaaaaaar-iuuuuuus". So let's dream his dream. Let's elect me.

TIM RICE: *"Peel, Peel - we loved you, John Pee-ee-eel!*
The way you made us fe-ee-el
So ve-e-e-e-e-ry re-ee-ee-al!
You made us want to sing and sque-ee-ee-eal
And go out to enjoy a slap-up me-ea-ea-al!"

TONY BENN: October 15th 2004. On the wireless this morning, the newscaster – a Blairite, let's make no bones about it – tells me the disc-jockey John Peel has died up a mountain in Peru.

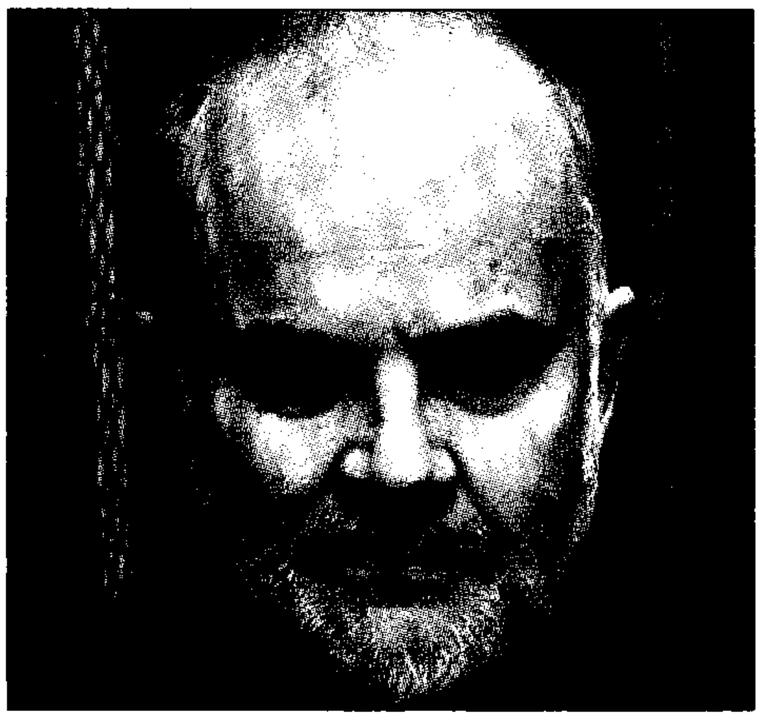
Needless to say, the newscaster – fully paid-up, incidentally – won't reveal whether Peel was pushed by a member of the Secret Services working in conjuction with the fascist regime out there. Well, he couldn't, could he – otherwise they'd do him in too.

What a bleak day for democracy when even a Radio 1 disc-jockey is pushed head-first off a mountain-top, just for playing a few tunes from the Hit Parade. Quite terrifying, really. What an untrustworthy man Blair really is. Of course, it wouldn't have been Blair himself, he's far too crafty. He'd've despatched his Foreign Secretary, little Jack Straw, up that mountain on his bicycle, equipped with a pair of gloves, to do away with any tell-tale fingerprints.

I feel quite sickened.

At lunchtime, the book launch goes splendidly. Tony Blair comes up and says how much he enjoyed reading it. What a lovely fellow he really is.

BEN ELTON: Let's ROCK! You said it, baby! Above all, John was a great entertainer, and that's the side of him I aim to bring out in "RockaPeely!" my sold-carat-gold new West End musical featuring all the magical sounds



A JOHN PEEL FESTSCHRIFT

made famous by the legendary but tragically now dead disc-jockey.

I've created an amazing story to make it a musical in a million (and – no, friends – I'm not talking about all the millions La Thatch gave in tax-breaks to her rich fascist friends back in the disastrous '80s!)

It's the story of a lone disc-jockey called Peely (played by the splendid Gareth Gates) who sets out to make his fame and fortune in London ("Ummagumma to London!" he sings plaintively on the platform, using the famous old Pink Floyd number). Arriving in London, the guy can't find a turntable anywhere and so sings "Suicide to Oblivion" by Blodwyn Pig, with its famous five-minute drum solo. But then a God-like figure descends to earth while the boys and girls of the chorus sing Deep Purple's "Stoned Messiah", and this figure (played by the superb Jade Goody) announces that Peely is his son, and the saviour of the world ("My Truth is Truly True" by Tyrannosaurus Rex).

And that's just for starters, folks! Rock-a-Peely a beautiful show, a musical about one guy's valiant struggle against the dark forces of materialism, and it opens at the Apollo in a fortnight (tickets £28-£75, discounts for groups).

HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II: At this time of year, the whole world celebrates the life of a very special "disc-jockey". To remember his work on the radio and the television is, I find, a welcome escape from the harsh realities of this troubled world. And it is at times like these, full of tensions and anxieties, that the simple story and message of John Peel is so relevant.

It is the story is of an ordinary man who played popular music of a "progressive type" and interspersed it with often humorous reminiscences and wry observations as well as the occasional request.

His numerous programmes on a variety of stations and channels were enjoyed by young and old alike. The lesson he taught us was one of tolerance. If it is natural that the younger generation should from time to time lose patience with their elders, it is also natural that the older generation should seek to remind them that the world will not improve if young people merely express themselves by indifference, or revulsion against what they regard as an out-of-date order of things. Far better that we all remember John Peel by joining hands and sitting around in a casual manner in order to nod along to a special favourite of myself and my family, *Tales from Topographic Oceans*, the formidable 1973 concept album by Yes.

HAROLD PINTER: I pay tribute to John Peel. It is to John Peel that I pay tribute.

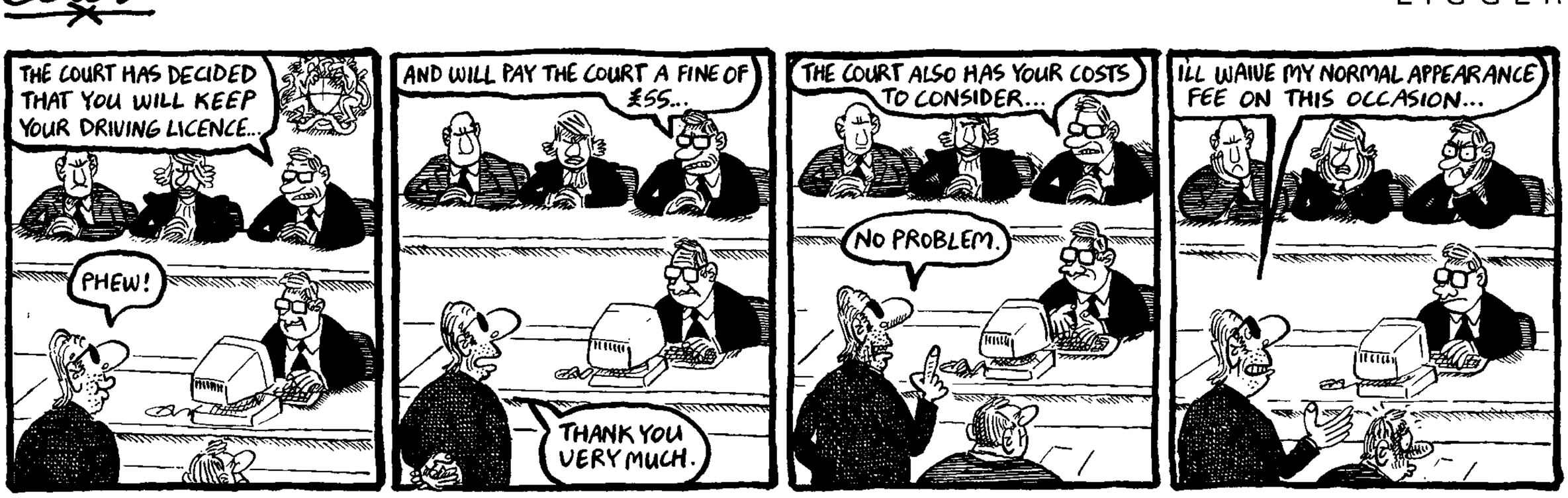
The guy kicked shit. And not only did he kick shit, but he kicked it right back up the arsehole, where it fucking belonged.

And once that shit was back up the arsehole – where it BELONGED – he made sure it fucking stayed there. He wasn't the kind of guy who would take crap from anyone, least of all an arsehole. He wasn't a chimpanzee. And nor am I. And nor is Lady Antonia. She confirmed this to me only yesterday. I was very stirred and moved by this confirmation. So fuck off, chum, or I'll fucking kick your fucking head in, because I've always abhorred violence of any kind, and it's what Peel would have wanted.

YOKO ONO: In the middle of one night, John woke me. I will never forget it.

He seemed kinda worried. He said, "You know Yoko, you are a much better disc-jockey than John Peel ever was." Then he said how much it upset him that some other people in the world didn't realise this. But I told him to calm down. I reassured him. I said, "John, in time the whole world will come to realise that what you say is true." And my words are prophetic. John Peel has now been dead for over a year, so in between records he can't say nothing anymore. Whereas I am alive, and I just love talking so much, because it brings peace to all the people of the world. Yoko loves you.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN


THE COURT HAS DECIDED THAT YOU WILL KEEP YOUR DRIVING LICENCE...
PHEW!
AND WILL PAY THE COURT A FINE OF £55...
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
THE COURT ALSO HAS YOUR COSTS TO CONSIDER...
NO PROBLEM.
I'LL WAIVE MY NORMAL APPEARANCE FEE ON THIS OCCASION...

Literary Review

Gay Daze

My Lives
Edmund White
(Bloomsbury, £17.99)

"IN THE mid-1950s, when I was fourteen or fifteen, I told my mother I was homosexual." So it begins, and so, I'm afraid, it goes on. Edmund White's autobiography offers no surprises to anyone who has ever picked up any of his previous books. And to anyone who hasn't, the element of surprise is soon lost as he goes over the same ground over and over again.

More than any other writer, gay or otherwise, White defines himself, his experience, and everything that has ever happened to him (all the usual subject matter of autobiography) by reference primarily, if not solely, to his sexual orientation. Everything is refracted (into various shades of pink) through this prism.

There are chapters devoted to his mother and father, as you'd expect in an autobiography, but they seem to be included only to provide further material for that psychological case study into which the son seems keen to turn himself and his life. They are added to a list of walk-ons who include "My Shrinks", "My Blonds", "My Women" and "My Friends", variously grouped together into separate chapters.

Since these chapters run concurrently rather than consecutively, much of the same chronological ground is reiterated. The repressive 1950s, the Stonewall Uprising, the early struggles as a writer, subsisting on ghosted textbooks, the AIDS crisis, the expatriate years in Paris: they all seem to come round again and again, like the carnival horses on some fairground carousel, looking more jaded and flaky each time.

Given that White has already turned so much of his life into autobiographical fiction, one wonders why he felt the need to churn it all round again. The answer lies somewhere towards the back of the book, where in a curiously ambiguous salute to Joyce Carol Oates, his "muse" (and fellow Princeton academic) he says she inspired him to become, like her, "a more prolific writer". Whether her stupendous (and stupefying) output is something that ought to be emulated, or even encouraged, is another matter. Judging by her recent novel *Rape* (see *Eye* 1139) probably not.

As for the University of Princeton, this seems to provide a welcoming environment for writers, particularly those whose work offers political-correctness bonus points. White is the director of his own department there, and no doubt the library stacks are clogging up nicely with his students' theses on various aspects of what one might now call "White Studies". Among his other distinguished colleagues he lists "the Man Booker Prize-winning novelist, Alan Hollinghurst".

Curiously enough, Hollinghurst himself neglected to mention this interesting nexus in his own, fondly glowing, review of *My Lives* in the *Guardian*. But as White explains in the chapter headed "My Friends", one of the functions of friendship is to "write blurbs for my books", and the same presumably goes for what one might call "peer reviews" in the papers.

Conscious of the fact that he has become something of a celebrity himself, White offers a slightly disingenuous explanation for not having written a chapter called "My Celebrities", duly noting all the names which he would have dropped had he stooped to such "frivolity". In this way, Elton John and Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol and Truman Capote, Gloria Vanderbilt and Charles Mingus, among others, all get the *OK!* thumbs up and *Hello!* salute. It's called having your cake and eating it. Or perhaps that should be having your cock and eating it, since these celebrities are only pushed to one side in order to make room for all the hustlers hired, bar boys picked up, adoring fans bedded and lonely hearts encountered, who in turn serve only to add to the mounting tally of dicks compulsively sucked. You'd think even the most ardent devotee of the fellatic arts must eventually grow weary on such a diet of worms.

White's frankness about himself ("I was old, fat, winded, impotent most of the time, hairy and with big breasts and a small dick") and his weaknesses ("I was in the grip of a compulsion that didn't have much to do with pleasure") may be offered in a spirit of diligent self-examination, or even clinical detachment, but it can also sound like the rambling monologue of a solipsistic bore. He is probably right to regard himself as a gay pioneer, perhaps even some sort of icon. But the minutiae of such a life do not necessarily bear endless repetition. It certainly seems rather otiose to add, at the end of the book, a "note on the author".

It is only when White strays from his favourite subject and talks about someone else that the book begins to get interesting. The chapters on his extraordinary parents stand out, as does the chapter entitled "My Genet", which is the closest we get to hearing about White's life as a writer. British readers may find it odd to see White's stays in London included in the chapter "My Europe", which is principally about his expatriate life in Paris, but the French are so delighted with him that they made him a commander of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

In the end what it comes down to is this: midwestern misfit finds his niche in gay Paree. Or to put it still more simply: the White stuff.

FIRST DRAFTS
London rolled languorously over on the ruffled sheets "Oh God, Peter" it purred "you were fantastic!"
Peter Ackroyd

Books & Bookmen

■ *THE advertising strapline for Jamie's Italy, the new Penguin tie-in book of the pukka one's latest Channel 4 series, invites readers to "get stuck in to the most authentic, simplest Italian recipes brought to you by the real experts: the locals" -- helped of course by an Essex-born Jim Davidson lookalike with the full backing of Sainsbury's.*

If readers wanted the same sort of thing direct from an actual Italian, the BBC and Fourth Estate had planned to go head to head with a series and book package by Lombardy-born Giorgio Locatelli, bearing the strikingly-similar title Giorgio's Italy. However, the book is nowhere to be seen in the shops despite having been published on 5 September; Amazon is quoting four to six weeks for delivery (never the mark of a bestseller) and the series is nowhere in the schedules. Has the authentic, but less famous Locatelli been sacrificed without a chance to take on his English usurper?

■ DESPITE the critical drubbing he got for his previous ill-judged venture into book publishing, the "poetry" collection *Blackbird Singing* (see *Eye* 1029), Paul McCartney has now entered into the world of children's fiction with *High in the Clouds* (Faber, £ 12.99).

This time round the popstar polymath has taken care to team himself up with an acclaimed writer, Philip Ardagh, along with illustrator Geoff Dunbar; but the story is Macca's own and concerns a squirrel called Wirral whose idyllic woodland habitat is destroyed by evil developers and who helps all his fellow creatures to escape to another idyllic habitat on the island of Animalia.

It's a pity no one seems to have told Sir Paul that there's already a children's story called *The Squirrel of Wirral*, by someone called Richard Harvey.

■ *JEFFREY Archer may be a pariah here, but in Australia they still love him.*

The Melbourne Writers' Festival is promoting an event on 5 December, modestly billed as "a once in a lifetime dinner with the world acclaimed author", to launch his new novel.

Why is he still so popular Down Under? "His prison record doesn't bother us," an Australian publisher explains. "We're all convicts here."

■ OVER at the *Grove Dictionary of Music*, subscribers were intrigued to see a "letter from the editor" appear on the front page of the online edition.

In it, editor-in-chief Laura "Fubsie" Macy (see *Eyes passim*) announced that "we have revised 100 articles based on information we received in response to a letter to our contributors, sent in April 2004". She goes on to promise a further 100 revisions in a couple of months or so, and states that she is "proud of the progress we have made".

In the brave new online world, does it really take 18 months to input this much data? Moreover, the *Grove* has around 6,000 contributors, most of whom found something wrong with their or their colleagues' entries as printed, largely due to the editorial rush job that was done on the eve of publication. Macy's 100 revisions are, therefore, a drop in the ocean.

'Bookworm'

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
THAT'LL BE £18.99
JOHN STEVENS MY LIFE FIGHTING CRIME
THIS IS DAYLIGHT ROBBERY! CALL THE POLICE!
JOHN STEVENS MY LIFE FIGHTING CRIME

Slight of hand

Gentlemen and Players
Joanne Harris
(Doubleday, £14.99)

A TRAWL through the web biogs reveals that prior to her reinvention as a best-selling novelist, Ms Harris here taught for a while at Leeds Grammar School. No doubt the average life-into-art progression is a great deal more subtle than critics would sometimes have us believe, but I think we can take it that "St Oswalds", the relatively lustrous north of England establishment where most of *Gentlemen and Players* is set, bears at least some faint resemblance to this ancient foundation. My only complaint – at any rate on grounds of realism – covers the fees. At £6,000 a year they seem absurdly cheap.

St Oswald's, the reader soon discovers, is the site of a fine old battle between the forces of progress and reaction. The former are represented by a reforming, IT-obsessed headmaster and his jobsworth sidekicks; the latter by sexagenarian classicist Roy Straitley, who, with his continually dropped Latin tags and pedantic mien might easily have padded in, all ghostly, gown-waving magnificence, from such early highlights of the genre as Hugh Walpole's *Mr Perrin and Mr Traill* or Evelyn Waugh's *Scott-King's Modern Europe*. Alas, St O's is ripe for desecration, and Straitley's shrewdly orotund musings are juxtaposed with the thoughts of a second narrator – purposeful, malign and with the school's best interests very much not at heart.

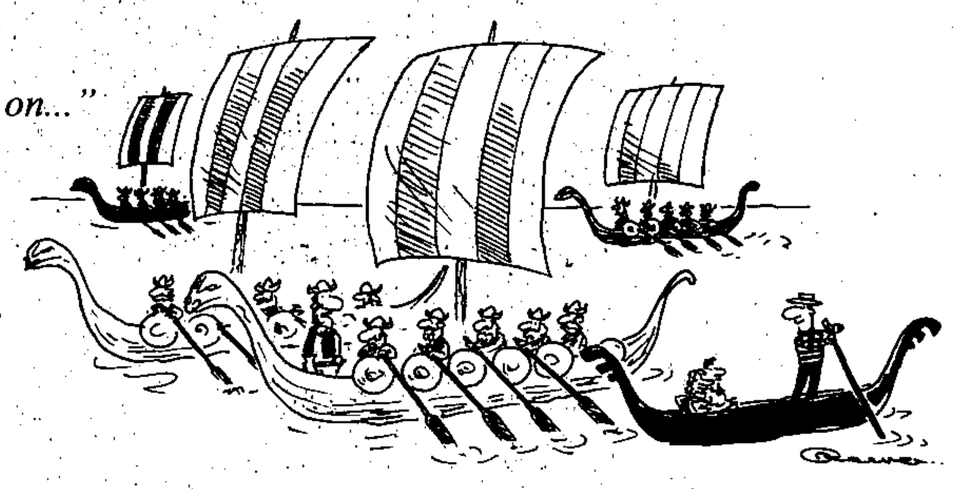
This person – and we'll leave the matter of gender hanging in the ether for a moment – is out for revenge: the renamed ingrate progeny of the former St Oswald's porter, in fact, who died in scandal-ridden circumstances 15 years before. There follows a devious war of attrition, beginning with theft and the sowing of dissentient seeds then escalating into abduction, murder and the (faked) implication of most of the male staff in a paedophile ring.

Meanwhile, the roots of our second narrator's grand fixation are being steadily uncovered to take in a meticulously planned masquerade, whereby this person, disgusted by a pre-teen entombment in the local sink comprehensive, infiltrated St O's in disguise to form a hero-worshipping and tragically concluded friendship with a hunky ne'er-do-well named Leon.

All this, it should be said, is ingeniously done, even if the red herring that carries it through turns practically scarlet along the way. The problem about this, however neat its framing, is that it turns out to be practically all that the book consists of, just authorial sleight of hand, which has the effect of tugging the novel away from its original moorings in the land of character and letting it drift off into a sea of ever more implausibly nasty events.

This reduction of nearly everything into an exercise in form is a pity, as beneath the accounts of Dianna Dare/Julia Snyde's ghoulish childhood in the porter's lodge lurk the glimmerings of a rather promising study of caste systems and the lure, to the underprivileged, of a patrician lifestyle-cum-world-view that draws its admirers closer, only to fatally exclude them when the going gets tough.

In the end, though, *Gentlemen and Players* loses sight of this objective in its eagerness to show – in some stagily complicated final pages – how everything works out



and this acts as a final confirmation that the people on display are figurative rather than mock-actual. For a thorough-going account of the oppressed masses getting their own back, readers are directed to Piers Paul Read's classic of the old-style class war, *The Upstart*.

LIBRARY NEWS

■ AS REPORTED in the last *Eye*, Birmingham's library bosses enjoyed several pricey junkets – sorry, fact-finding missions – checking out new libraries worldwide, before their £147m project was abandoned.

Assistant director of library services John Dolan and Cllr Ian Ward made a five-day trip to Vancouver and Seattle, costing £2,676. Two months later the pair spent four days in Singapore, costing £2,021.

Thank goodness all those facts gathered around the world won't go to waste. The well-travelled Mr Dolan has just been appointed head of library policy for the national Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

■ THE ban on staff recruitment at Bristol Libraries is starting to bite, with opening hours being trimmed hard.

Some branches are to shut up shop for a whole or a half week day and even the city's Central Library is to shut on Thursday afternoons. One branch is down to just three days a week, while others will shut at lunchtimes (surely a popular time for local workers) since there aren't enough staff to allow for breaks. Meanwhile the Reference Library and Learning Centre is to close "due to budget pressures" from October 24.

With funds so strapped, Bristol is looking for companies interested in "sponsoring" library services, offering the opportunity to plaster logos on the furniture, mobile library vans or even via the "IT Screen messages on some or all of the council's 225 'People's Network' PCs, search terminals or the library services' own website pages."

Number crunching

12% ■ Fall since 1997 in total number of books available to borrow in public libraries

66% ■ Rise in same period in number of videos and DVDs available

Pseuds Corner

Genius is rare and timeless, genius transcends, genius defies the humdrum laws of being that confine the rest of us. And by these measures was Ronnie Barker a genius.

***Times* leader**

Whiteread lives and works in a former synagogue in east London. Parts of Bethnal Green have been "chi-chified", as she describes it, but it remains raw. "We still have prostitutes standing on our corner, and people crapping round the back of buildings," she says. "The charms are still there."

GORDON BURN interviews RACHEL WHITEREAD, *Guardian*

This week Stuart is reading the Qur'an. "I'm only on surah (chapter) five, but thinking I should have learned Arabic rather than read Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall's Jacobean-style translation." Stuart visited the National Gallery: "I went to see the refurbished main entrance and stayed to study Leonardo's *sfumato* technique in the Virgin of the Rocks."

Byline for *Guardian* columnist STUART JEFFRIES

Time's arrow has fragmented. We're in a time where the nature of things is not about things, but about how we understand things. So architecture has to collapse. It's not about physical collapse; it's about notions of physicality. The scenographic is the perceptual mode of the 20th century.

Architect DAVID ADJAYE *Independent*

This is something else: a knee-trembler in the corner of a club that's both seedy and impossibly glamorous, the best mistake sex you've ever had, the sound of a band confident they can both destroy and become the rock canon. It would be hubris if it wasn't so much fun. It's rock history as a teleological process, all of it leading up to this series of controlled explosions, each and every one a little death, each and every one an end in itself rather than a vehicle for your agenda or placid wellbeing...You're the whirling centre of a non-stop cabaret of champagne and limousines, the reckless possibilities of living a life without consequences means you can do anything, everything, you can do it now now now and – perish the Catholic guilt thought – never explain, you can run, en masse, through the sunrise streets high-kicking all the way, belt out a dawn chorus at the tops of your haggard voices and start all over again.

LEON McDERMOTT reviews the new Franz Ferdinand CD, *Glasgow Sunday Herald*

Pseuds Corporate

There are many values demonstrated within the Cirque du Soleil shows that Lloyds TSB Corporate aspires to. They are innovative, imaginative, bold, cutting-edge performances.

Some of the core elements of their shows are already values which we share, such as the importance of teamwork and close relationships, and the demonstration of expertise.

Our sponsorship agreement is an exciting opportunity for some of these central themes to be presented to a wide and diverse audience with maximum impact.

LloydsTSB press release.

CONTRIBUTORS: Richard Plowden, Matthew Wilson, Karen Bull, J. Adshead, Andy Cranwell, Anon.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

MENEZES SHOOTING

Insult to injury

THE Home Office pathologist investigating the controversial death of Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes, shot in the head by police at Stockwell Tube station, may be about to be struck off for alleged "serious professional misconduct" in another case.

As if the affair weren't fraught enough already, it has now emerged that Dr Kenneth Shorrock was about to face a General Medical Council "fitness to practice" panel when he was called in to carry out the autopsy on Mr de Menezes. Last week a spokesman for the South London coroner, John Sampson, said no one knew of the disciplinary hearing when Dr Shorrock was approached.

Last month the GMC heard that Dr Shorrock had altered a post-mortem report which had led to a surgeon being accused of the manslaughter of a patient who bled to death following an operation. In his first report into the death of 78-year-old Gladys Allen, Dr Shorrock, then a consultant pathologist at the Royal Halifax Hospital, said she had been given "necessary surgery" by locum consultant urologist Hurais Ramis Syed. He concluded there was "no definite evidence of any avoidable deficiency in the medical or surgical treatment that she received".

Dr Shorrock then produced a second report which deleted the term "necessary" and deleted the sentence which cleared the surgeon of blame. Jeremy Roussak, for the GMC, said Dr Shorrock also gave a statement to police in September 2001 which absolved the surgeon of blame and another a month later which said it was "likely the death was contributed to by inadvertence, both before and during the operation".

Mr Syed was later charged with manslaughter but was cleared at Leeds Crown Court in 2003.

Mr Roussak told the panel that during the trial Dr Shorrock gave evidence that either "directly contradicted what he had said earlier in witness statements or which he retracted in cross-examination. All these pieces of evidence demonstrate changes of view and changes of factual evidence which were unjustified, which bear no relationship to the only examination which Dr Shorrock made, which were contrary to his duty as a pathologist and were so contrary to his duties as to constitute serious professional misconduct."

Dr Shorrock admitted changing the report but said he had had "sufficient" reason to do so and that his actions did not amount to serious professional misconduct. The case was adjourned until next month, when the panel will decide whether a total of eight "charges" relating to his handling of the case amount to serious professional misconduct and whether or not he will be struck off.

HARRY STANLEY

Shots in the dark

NO WONDER the family of Harry Stanley are distraught over the decision of the Crown Prosecution Service not to prosecute the two police officers who shot Mr Stanley.

They believed that new evidence unearthed by the latest Surrey police inquiry into the fatal shooting showed two bullet holes to the top left shoulder of Mr Stanley's jacket which appeared to suggest that he had been shot from behind.

That was largely what an inquest jury thought when it returned a verdict of unlawful killing after hearing that the angle of the fatal head wound contradicted the officers' accounts that Mr Stanley had for some extraordinary reason deliberately turned towards them, pointing his plastic bag and chair leg at them from the hip.

But it now seems that "ballistic bio-mechanics" experts, who study how a body moves when shot, have suggested that if the first bullet to hit Mr Stanley was the one that struck his hand, it could have caused his body to lurch and turn away from the shooters. One went further and said it might also have brought his arm round in such a fashion that it appeared from a certain angle to be swinging from the hip.

As a consequence, said the CPS, it could support the officers' claim that they fired at Mr Stanley in fear of their lives.

As Surrey police made clear, the use of ballistic bio-mechanics experts (more usually used to defend US police officers in shooting cases) "was groundbreaking work" which had never been tried or tested in the UK courts. Given suggestions that the Attorney-General Lord Goldsmith may have bowed to political pressure not to bring any charges in the case – made all the more sensitive by the shooting of Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes – nor will it be. Yet none of these experts could answer the key question: which bullet – the fatal one to the head, or the one to the hand – was fired first?

NUKES

The Bell tolls NDA

THE Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) thinks the best way to deal with nuclear waste is to hire a PR company.

The authority, responsible for cleaning up Britain's atomic refuse, signed a £100,000 deal with Bell Pottinger in the summer; and the PR outfit, run by Lord Bell, will offer "strategic communications advice" just as it has to other popular clients like Chile's General Pinochet or GM firm Monsanto.

Private Eye asked the NDA if hiring a PR firm was the best way to build public trust in the nuclear clean-up. NDA spokesman John Phillips said: "We are entitled to take some advice. Bell Pottinger can help us and act as a sounding board." The firm certainly has enough old nuclear hands on its payroll.

Kevin Murray, who will lead the account, served on the board of the Atomic Energy Authority with Sir Anthony Cleaver, the current chairman of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, in the 1990s. He worked with Cleaver on the privatisation of AEA Technology, an engineering arm spun out of the public nuclear body that runs the Dounreay atomic site. Murray even hired Bell Pottinger (in its previous incarnation as Lowe Bell) to help with the sale of AEA Technology.

Alas, the privatisation and contractorisation at Dounreay left the organisation unable to look after safety at the site properly, prompting a highly critical report by the Health & Safety Executive. The National Audit Office also seriously questioned whether the public lost money in the sale of AEA Technology. However, both Murray and Cleaver moved on before these criticisms hit home.

Murray went on to become Bell Pottinger's glow-in-the-dark man, advising British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. Bell Pottinger suggested all kinds of spin in a doomed attempt to rescue the privatisation of BNFL in the wake of the scandal over faked fuel rod data, but the firm's good advice was little help, particularly when Bell Pottinger's BNFL strategy memos were leaked to the press.

The PR firm is putting other well connected men on the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority account too: Tim Walker, for example, formerly a Labour Party official and special adviser to Jack Cunningham, the ex-Labour cabinet minister with strong nuclear interests.

TAX DODGING

Clueless Clucas

DESPERATE to hold on to its tax haven status despite growing international hostility, Jersey needs those running the island's countless tax-dodging companies *(surely "offshore financial services providers"? Ed.)* to at least appear squeaky clean.

One man who doesn't seem to have got the message is Ted Clucas, chairman of one of Jersey's oldest and richest trust companies, Herald Trust, and developer of St Helier's new £50m Waterfront hotel that hopes to attract big-spending business junkets to the island.

A recent employment tribunal in Croydon has revealed that when confronted with a crude tax fraud at a British software company that until recently he chaired, rather than report the matter to the Inland Revenue, Clucas washed his hands of the company and sacked the whistleblower.

Two years ago Message Gateway Ltd took on a corporate specialist, Greg Hughes, to prepare the company for a sale. It wasn't long, however, before the new boy smelt a rat: the company wasn't paying its bills and appeared to be trading even though insolvent; while the man who described himself as its managing director, Kevin Smedley, wasn't even registered as a director at Companies House.

When Hughes discovered that Smedley, a chartered accountant, had been paying an employee thousands of pounds in bogus "expenses" without deducting tax and national insurance, he immediately went to chairman Clucas who, in the tribunal's words, "told [Hughes] that if the Jersey regulator found out about this it would ruin his reputation on the island".

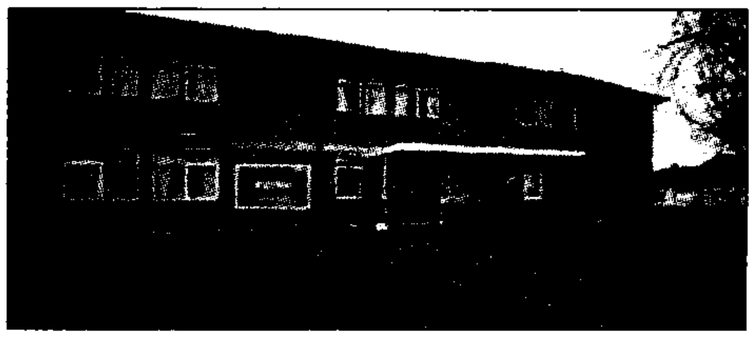
Although Smedley was forced to resign immediately, a week later it became clear that he was plotting to buy Clucas's 82 percent share in the company. With the sale hastily arranged, Smedley and Clucas sacked the awkwardly honest Hughes, leaving him £125,000 out of pocket.

Throughout the dispute Clucas and Smedley refused to supply vital information, including details of a complex sale of the business that appeared to be designed to frustrate Hughes' claims and those of other creditors. They pretended to have kept Hughes informed of the deals hatched behind his back when they evidently hadn't, prompting the tribunal to describe their testimony as "breathtaking in its dishonesty". The panel unsurprisingly had little difficulty in concluding that Hughes had indeed been unfairly dismissed for blowing the whistle.

Hughes' struggle for the £167,760 compensation awarded him is far from over, however. His former employer's accountants helpfully suggested liquidating the two companies that were found liable as a means of dodging the bill. In one email Robert Smailles of Rothman Pantall advised: "The industrial tribunal is of course a concern that can be eliminated if an insolvency procedure is commenced". Smailles then became the companies' liquidator – ignoring the conflict of interest arising from his earlier advice that should have disqualified him from acting – and in August transferred their assets to a new company, M-Voucher, which carries on the business without the inconvenience of having to pay Hughes or various other creditors.

The Insolvency Practitioners Association might want to look into Smailles' role in this sordid episode, while the Jersey regulators may reflect on Clucas's suitability to run one of the major financial services outfits on the island. Smedley, meanwhile, was in court again last month, this time on the wrong end of a £16m civil fraud judgment in an unrelated matter. He has been arrested and is on police bail.

PS: Herald Trust advertises its British tax-dodging services as perfectly legal. "Contracting with an offshore company for the services of a contractor negates the requirement for the UK company to make national insurance contributions, currently set at 12 percent," it declares, when this simple dodge has in fact been outlawed for years. Some of Herald's wealthy British clients might be receiving some unwelcome attention from HM Revenue and Customs before long.



BUPA

Kiss and make it worse

FEEL better with Bupa, as the advert promises? Not if you complain about Bupa's treatment of a departed loved one only to receive a lawyer's letter threatening you with legal action for harassment.

Such is the experience of Dee Sedgwick, who is still distraught three years after her mother Joan Gaddes, a resident of Bupa Care Homes' Highfield residence in Bedford, died in hospital in September 2002. This was just over a month after being admitted to hospital suffering weight loss and dehydration. She also had pressure sores that had not been diagnosed until the day of admission.

Mrs Sedgwick does not want compensation; merely an explanation and apology from Bupa over the care her mother received while at Highfield.

After her death, a report from the National Care Standards Commission upheld Mrs Sedgwick's complaints over the home's failure to monitor and deal with her mother's nutritional needs in the crucial weeks before her admission to hospital with dehydration. Mrs Sedgwick had on several occasions voiced concerns about her mother's failing health and had even asked that her mother be placed on a drip because she appeared so dehydrated.

A more recent report from the Care Services Development Agency said that while the home failed to follow its own nutritional policy and failed to take action once weight loss was identified, "there is no evidence available to indicate that food and fluids were *deliberately* withheld".

Mrs Sedgwick has now obtained her mother's full home and medical records which, she believes, give very detailed evidence of a lack of care. Hence she has been writing since August to Bupa's chairman and chief executive, asking for a meeting.

Admittedly distraught, Mrs Sedgwick has been robust in her complaints. In order to get a response to her letters, she followed the advice of a newspaper consumer column and wrote to the bosses at their homes. While her letters have been angry and occasionally insulting, they are the frustrated outpourings of a grief-stricken daughter rather than "threatening".

Although Bupa offered to arrange meetings with the head of care homes, Mrs Sedgwick wanted to take her complaints to Bupa's chiefs.

Moreover, last week she received a letter from City law firm Rosenblatts, couriered to her home in Lowestoft, accusing her of "contacting our clients, directors and staff, in an increasingly threatening and aggressive manner" and suggesting she "desist from harassing their clients and get a lawyer".

The *Eye* asked Bupa about this heavy-handed response. In a statement it said: "After two independent inquiries (by the National Care Standards Commission and more recently by the Commission for Social Care Inspection) no evidence was found to indicate that Mrs Gaddes died because of the standard of care received in our home. Over the last three months, three years after the death of her mother, Mrs Sedgwick has written and faxed various members of BUPA staff, at both their offices and their private homes. Her allegations have escalated over time and have become increasingly challenging to the extent that members of staff now feel threatened."

So much for the Bupa ad theme tune, "Kiss it and make it better".

COUNTRYSIDE PROPERTIES

Homes to dye for

SEVERAL times this year the *Eye* has revealed that Countryside Properties (CP), one of "new" Labour's favourite developers, has filed inaccurate planning applications to councils across England for the development of contaminated brownfield sites.

When CP applied for planning permission on a site in Hackney riddled with unexploded bombs (*Eye* 1130), it refused to confirm their existence in the application. In Rochdale, it filed an application for the development of what was once the world's largest asbestos textile factory, in which it stated there was "a notable absence of asbestos contamination" when the site was, and is, full of the stuff (*Eyes passim*).

So why, when Countryside filed another outline application for more than 150 homes on a former tannery, bleach and dye works at Norden, did Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council not insist on an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the site? It makes it difficult for Rochdale to hold the developer's clear-up to account, which is doubly unfortunate, given that the site is extensively contaminated – as Countryside knows full well.

Page 8 of a survey of the site, completed by environmental consultants Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) and sent to Graham Peasant at Countryside's HQ on 3 June 2004, states: "The site has a long history of industrial land use with a high potential for extensive contamination... intrusive site investigations will be required to determine areas of fills and the concentration and extent of contamination." In other words, SKM recommended that precisely the kind of investigation covered by an EIA should happen.

Last week time ran out for residents to field protests to the council and now no EIA will take place. CP, meanwhile, is inviting househunters to "find out what makes our homes so distinctive". If they are regular *Eye* readers, they already know...

SALMON STAKES

Fishy Business

WOULD you lend £650,000 to a fish farmer whose last two companies had gone down the tubes?

Not many banks would; but step forward Shetland Islands Enterprise (SIE). It has just approved such a loan to North Atlantic Sea Farms, set up by Shetland fish farmers John Goodlad and his cousin Alistair.

John and Alistair (brother Morgan is chief executive of Shetland Island Council) have been key-players in recently bust fish farms: SSG Seafoods in December 2003, where John was chairman; Breassy Salmon in January 2004, owned by John and Alistair; and Cro Lax Salmon in June 2004, also owned by John and Alistair.

Upwards of £10m of Shetland cash has been lost but these Goodlads just keep coming back for more: generally forming a new company to buy out (at a knock down price) the remaining assets of their previous business failures so they can start all over again.

If you were daft enough to risk chucking good money after bad, what sort of security would you hope for: personal guarantees, perhaps; or a charge over houses and flats one may or may not own in and around Shetland and abroad; or maybe a brace of land cruisers and a few motor yachts?

No such bother for John and Alistair, who didn't personally secure the loan. According to SIE, it is secured by "a bond and floating charge over the applicant company". So if North Atlantic Sea Farms goes the same way as their last two fish farms, might it be goodbye to £650,000 and hello, yet again, to another new company?

SIE can't be blamed for playing fairy godmother to fish farmers. It's the fault of the incestuous relationship that Jack McConnell's Scottish Executive has with its "love child" industry. SIE spokeswoman Ann Black explained: "The Scottish Executive has asked us to assist salmon farming businesses in this way."

HIGH PRINCIPALS

Lancaster bummer

HOPES that the courts would stand up for free speech and academic freedom were dashed last month when six Lancaster University students (*Eyes passim*) were convicted of aggravated trespass for taking part in a demonstration on their own campus.

The six were protesting at a "corporate venturing" conference organized by the university with companies, including BAE Systems and Shell, the students claimed had a history of environmental or human rights abuses.

After protesting outside the lecture hall, the students entered the conference, briefly addressed the audience and handed out leaflets before they were removed by staff. Although the students maintain that when police were called by the university, officers told them they were not committing any offence, five months later they were summonsed for aggravated trespass.

Despite protests and appeals from academics, unions, lawyers, human rights groups and even some of those who were at the conference, Lancaster University pressed ahead. And after a four-day trial at Lancaster Magistrates' Court, District Judge Peter Ward said that while he accepted the students were neither obstructive nor intimidating, they were "disruptive". Each was given a two-year conditional discharge and ordered to pay £300 costs.

Anxious that the use of the aggravated trespass laws to silence peaceful protest and free speech will now set a precedent to stifle political dissent, the students, backed by civil rights group Liberty, will take their case to appeal.

FAT CATS

Purr usual

THE criticism levelled at City law firm Charles Russell last year over the vast amount it was paying itself and others to administer the trust fund set up for vCJD victims and their families clearly fell on deaf ears.

The latest annual report from the vCJD fund trustees shows that in the last year the fund awarded nearly £3.1m to victims and their families while running up costs of £1.9m. Charles Russell itself took nearly £818,000 of that. While this figure is certainly down on the £1.2m it was paid in the previous year, it also paid a similar sum in fees to another law firm, Irwin Mitchell.

Thus over the three years Charles Russell has been administering the scheme, it has paid out £16.7m to 158 victims while incurring costs of £5.3m, of which £3.2m has been paid by Charles Russell to, er, Charles Russell. Or to put it another way, for every £10 paid to a victim, Charles Russell takes around £2 for itself and £1 for someone else.

You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

THE Tories are not the only ingrates who do not want former Chancellor Ken Clarke as their leader. The largest shareholders in AIM minnow Savoy Asset Management – the Kuwaiti investors behind Global Investment House – are also determined to oust him from his £50,000, one-or-more-days-a-month job as non-executive chairman of the poorly performing investment managers.

They blame Ken for being too supportive of his long-time Europhile political ally and sometime cash backer Christopher Saunders, SAM's £125,000-a-year chief executive who, the Kuwaitis claim, is not up to the job.

Saunders donated to Clarke's two previous bids for the Tory leadership in 1997 and 2001 and could have done so again this time. Tutton & Saunders, the stockbroking firm run by Saunders and former SAM director Tom Tutton which was injected into SAM, also donated to the 2001 campaign.

Clarke and Saunders deny the Kuwaiti claims, say they are running as fast as they can in hard times and that Global is all sand and no tent, trying to steal control of the company on the cheap without the expense of making a full bid. The Kuwaitis paid 187.5p in 2000 for what was then almost 30 percent. SAM shares are now 169p, after a run up inspired by bid rumours encouraged by the boardroom strife, and the Kuwaiti stake has been diluted to 25.5 percent by share issues.

In normal circumstances the al-Sabah family who run Global would be considered to be in with a good shout of ousting chairman Clarke given the SAM performance. It has paid no dividend since 2002 and made the first profit for four years last year while directors' pay has risen from £352,000 in 2001 to £825,000 last year – a rise of £160,000 on the year.

Furthermore the SAM directors muster only just under 12 percent of the votes for the shareholders meeting to be held 1 November at that Tory stronghold, the Carlton Club, where SAM does much of its boardroom business. But that ignores the large number of SAM shares held by employees and those fortunate clients of the group who over the years have been advised (some might say overly encouraged) to buy shares in the company managing their portfolios.

SAM admitted earlier this year, after the matter was raised by Global with the Takeover Panel, that "over 50 percent" of the company's shareholders are "working as a concert party" and that this situation had maintained since SAM floated in 1997. Not that this point had previously been made clear – a somewhat surprising oversight!

Given that another 14 percent of SAM is held by Tom Tutton and the widow of former Slater Walker fund manager Brian Banks, and that they are understood to back the board, it suggests that more than 25 percent of SAM – the Kuwaitis suggest as much as 33 percent - is held by clients of Savoy Investment Management or other group companies and employees. That figure may have increased after rumours that Barbara Banks has sold a chunk of her 6 percent holding although no announcement has yet been made.

And what a great investment SAM has been. Floated at 95p the shares hit 375p in 2000 but were down around 80p by 2003 and since last year have fluctuated between 95p and 181p. Clarke himself paid 248p for 4,000 shares in 2000 when he joined as chairman and 125p for 8,000 shares in 2003.

"Love the new wall decorations, J.B."

Those clients who SAM put into their shares have hardly made a big score and have been without a dividend since 2002. How many were/ are discretionary clients for whom SAM can take investment decisions is not known. Historically, discretionary clients in general have always been used as City cannon fodder, part of a broking or management firm's "stuffing power" when it came to ensuring that there were buyers for even the most unwanted shares. Discretionary private clients traditionally always got the shaft while the prized clients or those, like institutions who made their own calls, always got the mine.

On an impartial basis it might be thought that many of those SAM clients might be in favour of change, especially as the Kuwaitis talk about being prepared to inject up to £20m into a company which is currently valued at little more than £16m.

The client block is crucial. A vote of 50.1 percent against and Clarke is probably gone with Saunders soon to follow. Without the clients' votes the board and the Kuwaitis are evenly matched at 25 to 26 percent each although the employee votes give the board a bigger edge. With the clients' votes the board and Clarke are home free. Especially if the board are backed by value investor Julian Treger who picked up 3 percent last November. Even if all the other Savoy shareholders wanted Clarke out, they would lose.

It is likely that the arrangements under which Savoy Investment Management or other group companies manage those shares on behalf of their clients could well enable them to vote the shares as well. But even if they have to ask the clients for their view first, it seems unlikely that they will be advising any SAM clients to vote against Clarke.

So there is a clear conflict of interest posed by the question of how the SAM shares held for individual investment clients are voted. The managers will want them to vote to support the board but the clients' interests could well be the opposite. But can the result be anything other than support for the board if the shares are already part of an admitted, long standing "concert party" with the board? Will clients be afforded a free vote? Do the managers already hold their proxy to vote as they see fit – ie with the board?

In America undoubtedly by now the courts would have been brought into the action to either prevent SAM from voting the clients' shares as a block or forcing them to show that they have conducted a fair and open poll of their opinions and enabled clients to have independent advice on how to vote. Such action would also have probably triggered some action by regulators to clarify the voting issue. So far, however, the Fundamentally Supine Authority has stayed silent despite approaches from the Kuwaitis who have raised the question as to whether it is appropriate for SAM to sell its own shares to clients.

SAM should be required to make clear on what basis the votes of those shares held by its clients will be and are exercised. If it does not and Clarke wins – the badly bruised big beast is hardly likely to want another rejection – with the support of the client block it will be proof of Stalin's dictum about voting: what matters is not who votes, but who counts the votes.

SUGGESTIONS that stockbroker Barry Townsley is about to be rewarded for his donations to Labour causes – some £10,000 to the party, a similar amount to Frank Dobson's failed, Blair-backed bid to become Mayor of London and £1m to another Blairite favourite, city academies – has raised a few greying City regulatory eyebrows.

The personable Townsley made his way in the City first at Astaire & Co and then with his own firm, Jacobson, Townsley. That was sold to the Dutch bank Insinger for £10m in 1999.

Although a good networker, Townsley had an inside edge which did no harm to his career as a stockbroker. He married Laura, one of the three heiress daughters of Great Universal Stores multi-millionaire Lord Wolfson. This helped business after the scandal surrounding another less wealthy or particular client, the late Sir Trevor Dawson who committed suicide by plastic bag in 1983 while under investigation by the City Police.

Dawson, known as the Galloping Major, had been the investment boss at merchant bankers Arbuthnot Latham until he resigned under an ever darkening cloud in 1981. He was at the centre of a major Stock Exchange investigation into the activities of the Manchester stockbrokers Halliday, Simpson. Dawson was accused of effectively being bribed for making investments with Arbuthnot funds. Senior Halliday Simpson

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG

EWSDAY
SIR JULIAN, WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WORK-LIFE BALANCE?
WELL-ON THE ONE HAND EMPLOYEES CAN LIVE TO WORK...
...AND ON THE OTHER HAND...
...THEY GET FIRED!
202.

Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

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partner David Garner was charged by the Stock Exchange with gross misconduct and banned for life. The firm ceased trading.

In June 1982 Townsley and his partner Ronnie Jacobson were excluded from the floor of the Stock Exchange for six months over their dealings with the Galloping Major. They were found guilty by the Stock Exchange of the seemingly technical offence of not marking (correctly booking) bargains carried out for Dawson and Arbuthnot. The clear suggestion, indicated by the severity of the punishment which was only slightly short of suspension, was that these share deals had been done for Dawson's personal benefit – which is why perhaps they had not been marked correctly.

They and the firm survived both that censure and Dawson's death and no action was taken as a result of the police inquiries. So when the brave new world of Big Bang regulation came in with the Securities Association in 1988, both men and their firm were accepted as fit and proper to be authorised.

Three years ago Townsley's firm – now renamed Insinger de Beaufort – featured in an investigation into suspected insider dealing in Railtrack shares. No action was taken by the FSA which was satisfied that there had been no leak of Whitehall information.

Last year Barry left Insinger to join Guy Naggar, an old contact from Astaire days who now runs investment banking boutique Dawnay Day. Doubtless the ghost of the greedy and corrupt Galloping Major will quite rightly not block Barry Townsley's deserved route to the House of Lords.

CHRISTOPHER Samuelson was no doubt pleased to see Everton, the Premiership club he spent months saying he was going to takeover on behalf of offshore clients, take a first point off champions Chelsea.

The Geneva-based company administrator needs some good news. Reports from Switzerland say that the authorities have made two separate visits to the offices of his Mutual Trust outfit in the past month in relation to Russian-inspired investigations linked mainly, but not exclusively, to Yukos. No doubt they were satisfied with everything they found.

In his former life as the man behind company administrator Valmet, Samuelson worked closely with Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the now jailed Yukos boss whose Menatep group once held shares in Valmet. In doing so Samuelson also shared Park Lane offices with lawyer Stephen Curtis whose helicopter fell out of the sky last year. Curtis and Samuelson helped to create and run the offshore structures through which Khodorkovsky and friends controlled Yukos and moved billions (legally, they claimed) out of Russia.

Both, but particularly Curtis, were keepers of lucrative secrets that the Russian authorities were and still are greatly interested in and which the Khodorkovsky camp want to stay secret. The murky offshore matters behind Menatep and Yukos are likely to be revisited at the Curtis inquest which opens next week.

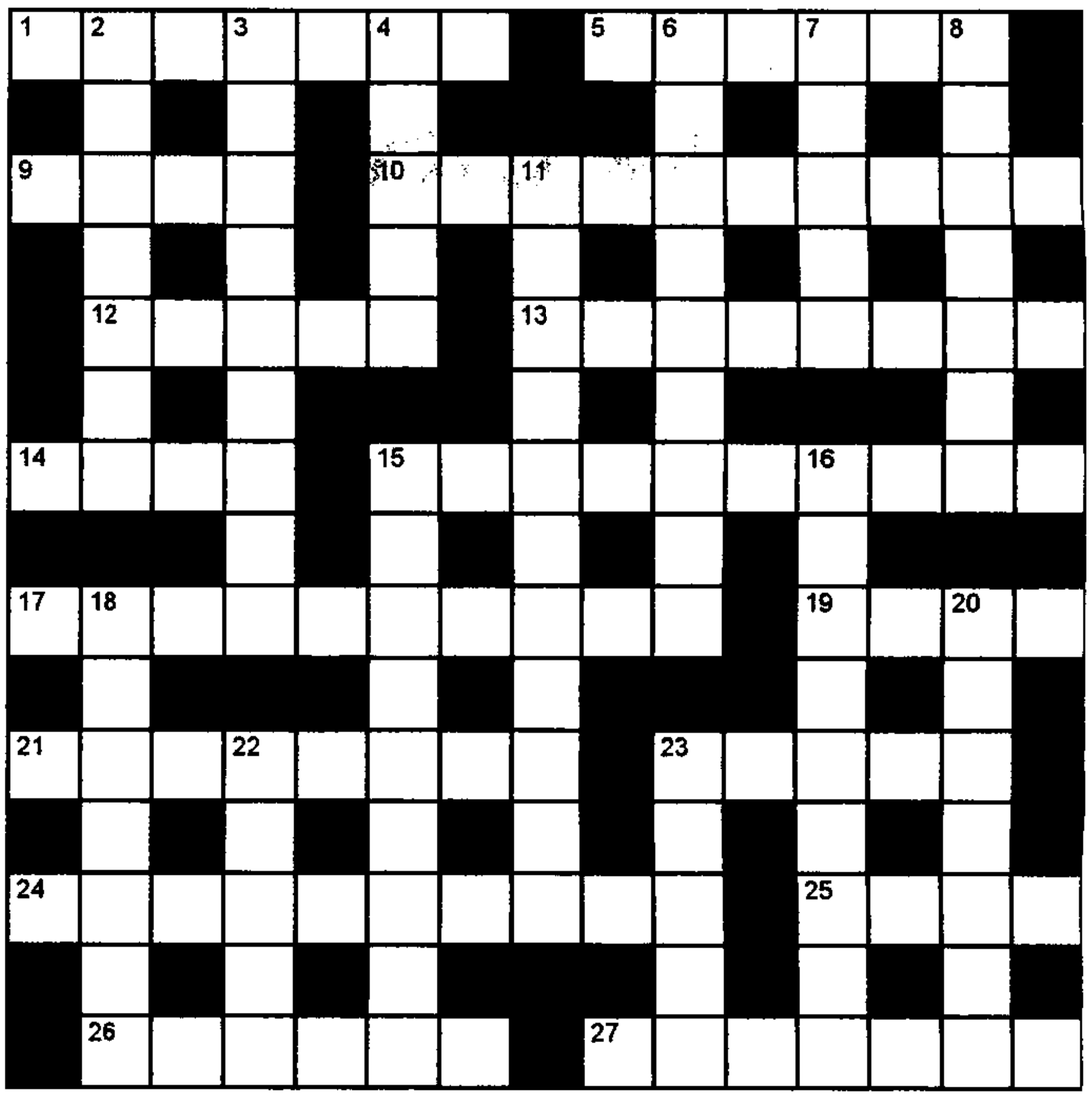
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 299

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 5 November 2005

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1/15ac. As one thrill popular with specified footballers, nothing replaces advanced professional foul, maybe (1,4,2,3,7)

5 Following bust implant model's getting one out, Norway's smitten with them (6)

9 Quango's lost housing capital (4)

10 Oddball source of Berlin souvenir, so the tourist is told? (3,3,4)

12 Dodgy broadcaster after doing over the tax man (5)

13 He hasn't scored for ages, Blair, struggling to get end away (Brown's end working, with iodine) (8)

14 It might give you an itch to piss off, it's said (4)

15 See 1

17 'Hitler' Ken manoeuvring to grab Member's seat of power (3,7)

19 Flatulence when mounting Penny? Let out pants (4)

21 Wildly popular TV series in shit (5,3)

23 See 15dn.

24 John has to pucker lips making allowances for Brenda and co. (5,5)

25 Dog's arse needing a different opening (4)

26 I am surprised getting penetrated by flipping dog – get changed (6)

27 Horsey-sounding type who does drugs? (7)

DOWN

2 Flighty thing helps provide quickest relief (7)

3 Interference / head from Cher, and Jonathan gets gas (5-4)

4 Blair on youth – spot the mockery (5)

6 Bit of rough for the old queen provided by Prescott and colleague? (4,5)

7 Tree women "covered" by horse (5)

8 Pisspoor senile Conservative shut up (7)

11 Disciplinarian's droop: girl lifted bollocks (11)

15/23ac. In charge of which, Blair's responsible for quite a few bum steers? (3,4,2,5)

16 Hose member when it gets more ardent (3,6)

18 Commonplace stink associated with rap (7)

20 Pitiful respect shown by Brenda's staff (7)

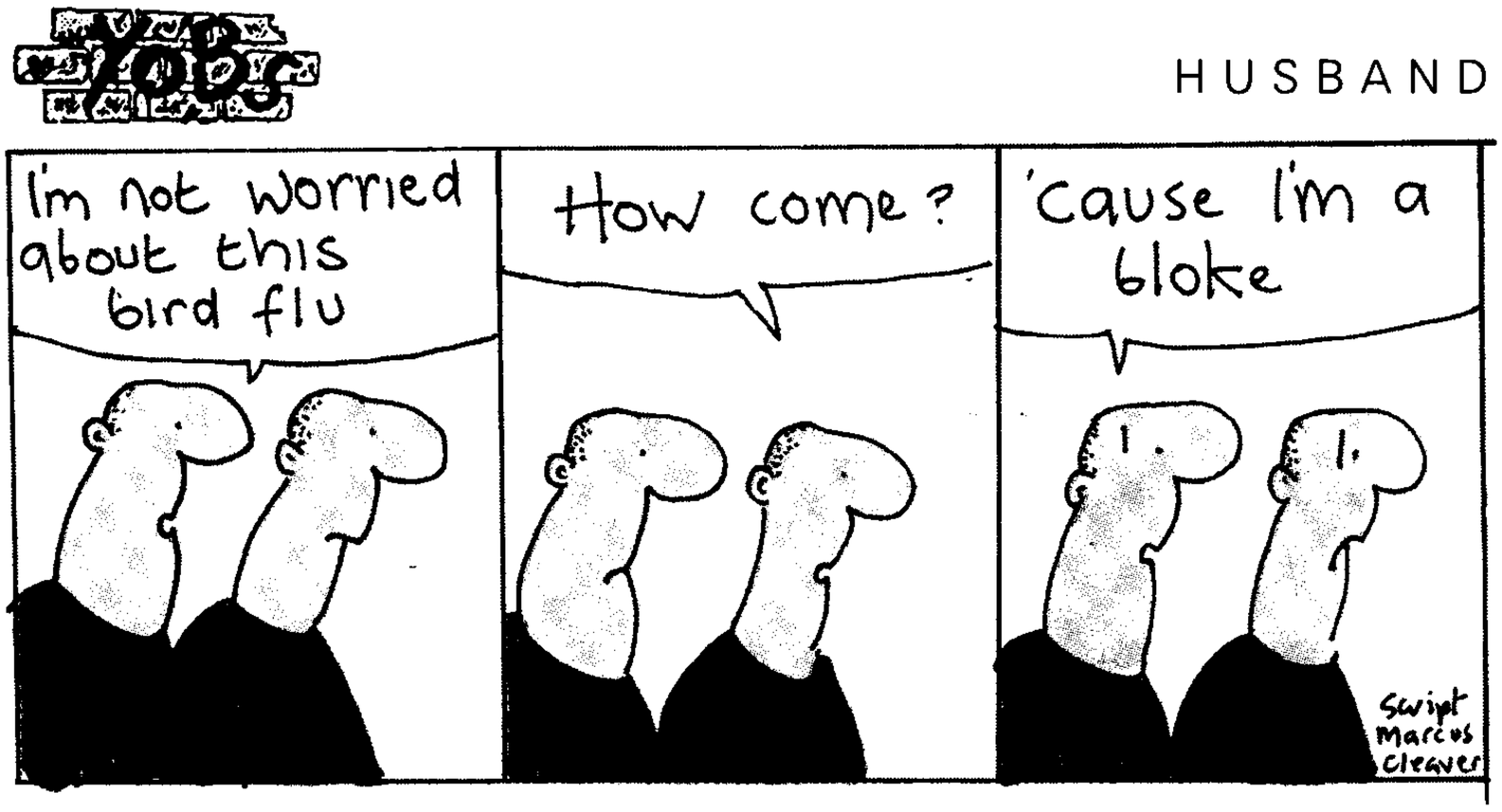
22 Left excluded from Labour Day and put aside (5)

23 Hard poop (5)

Crossword 297 winner: TIM CAIN

ACROSS: 1/28 The Queen's Speech 6 Camp 9 Al Gore 10 Oddballs 12 Utter tripe 13/29 Maryland 14 Spidery 16 Impeach 18 Dynasty 20 Abelard 23 Iraq 25 Ubiquitous 27 Knee-jerk 30 Stir-fried.

DOWN: 2 Hell to pay 3 Quote 4 Elector 5 Nookie 7 Alarm bell 8 Paler 11/22 Dream ticket 15 Drag queen 17 Carbuncle 19 Truce 21 Bruiser 24 Renal 26 Their.



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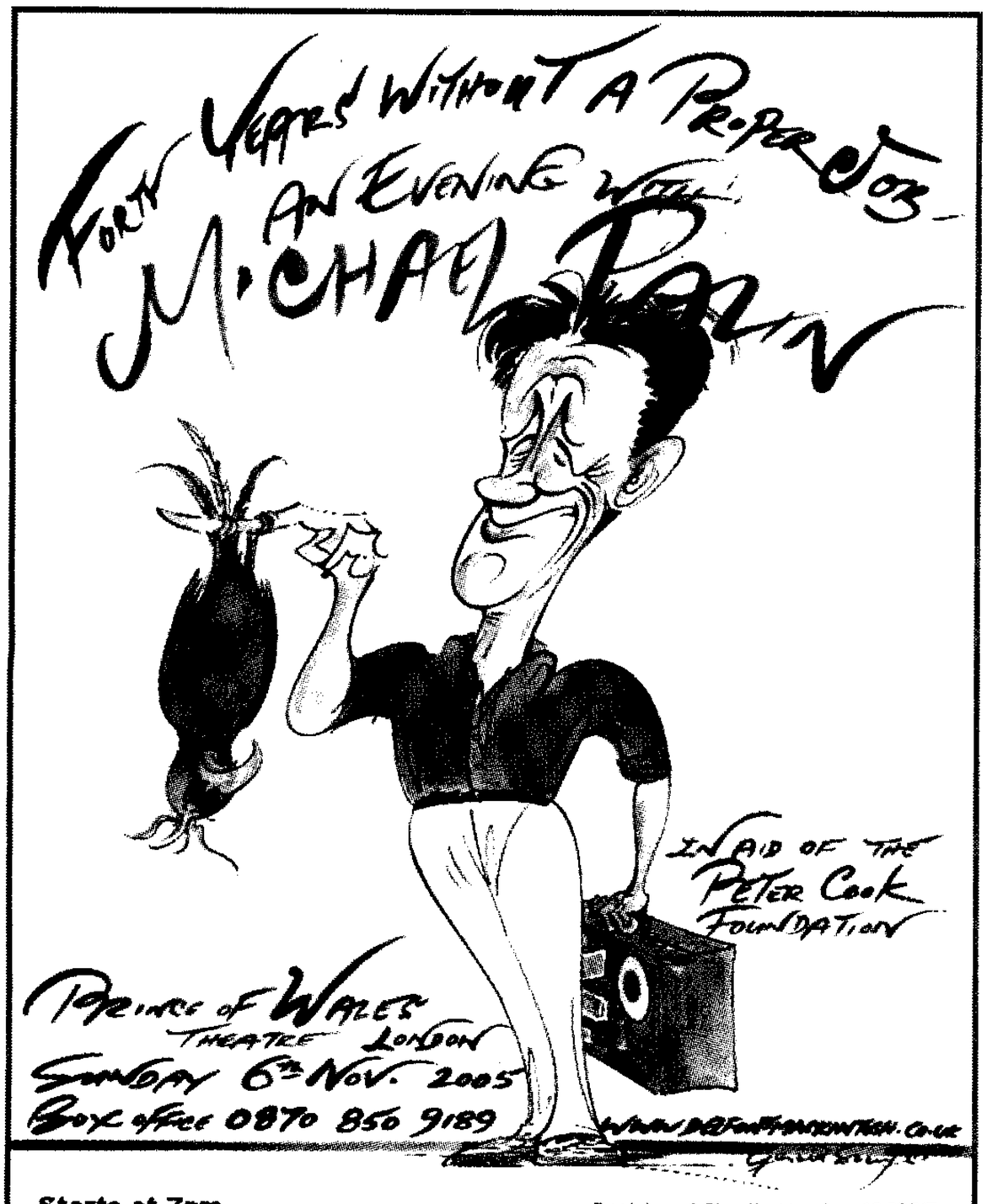
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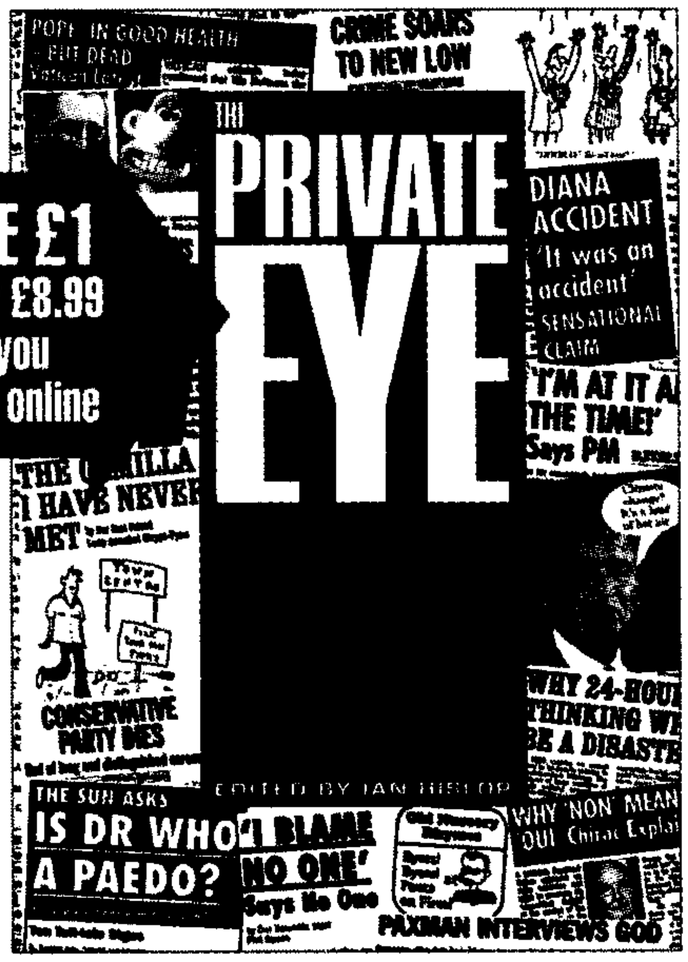
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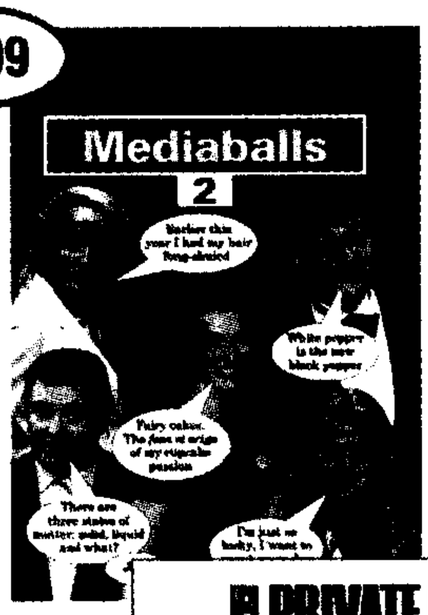

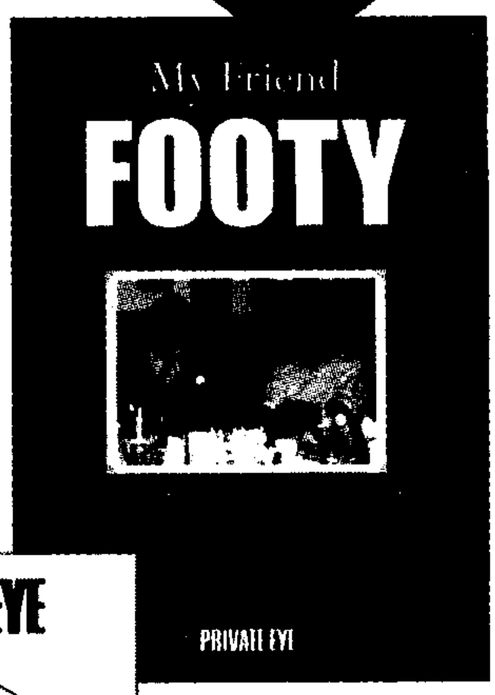

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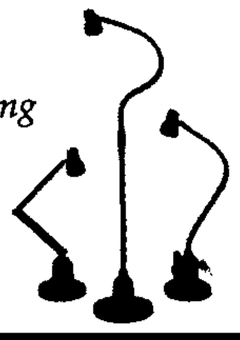

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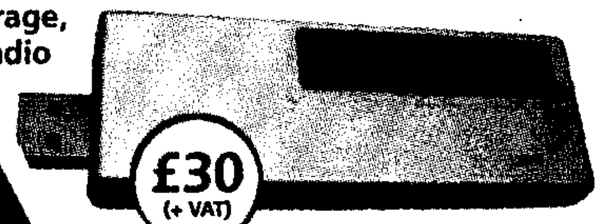

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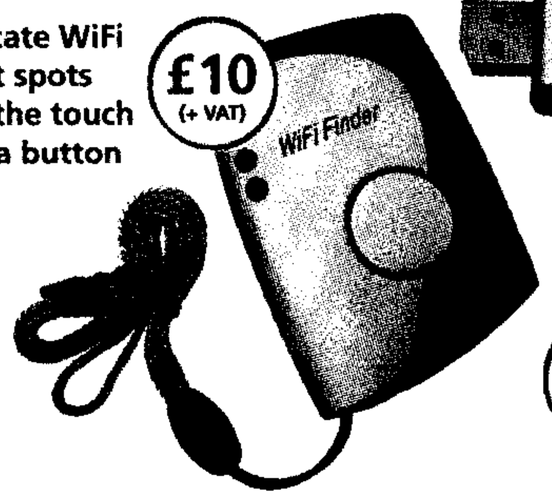

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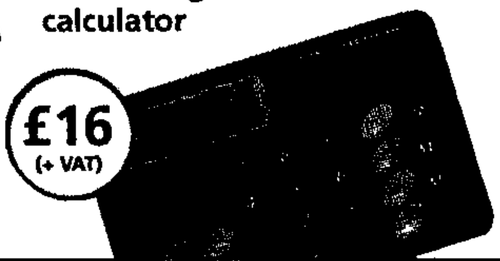

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OM SAI RAM

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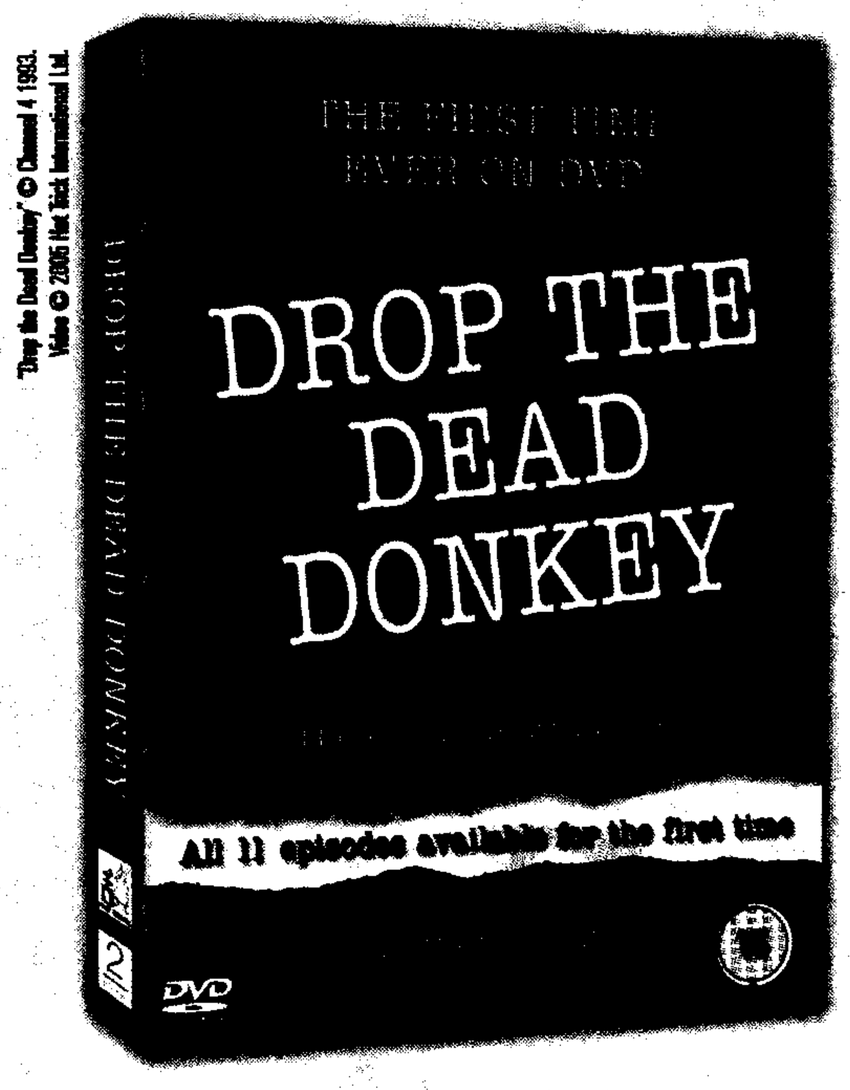

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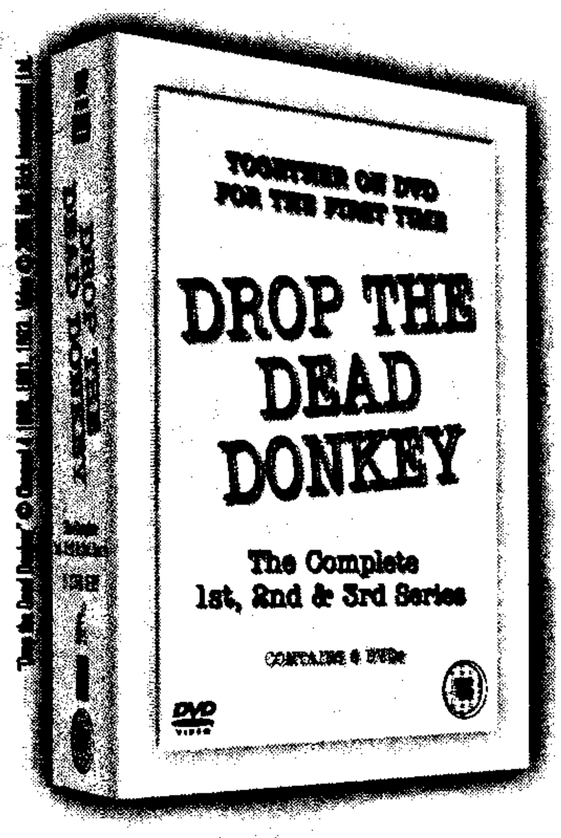

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HELP ME ACHIEVE SOMETHING. Got plan but need motion. Thank you! S/C: 08-92-86. A/C: 11098289.

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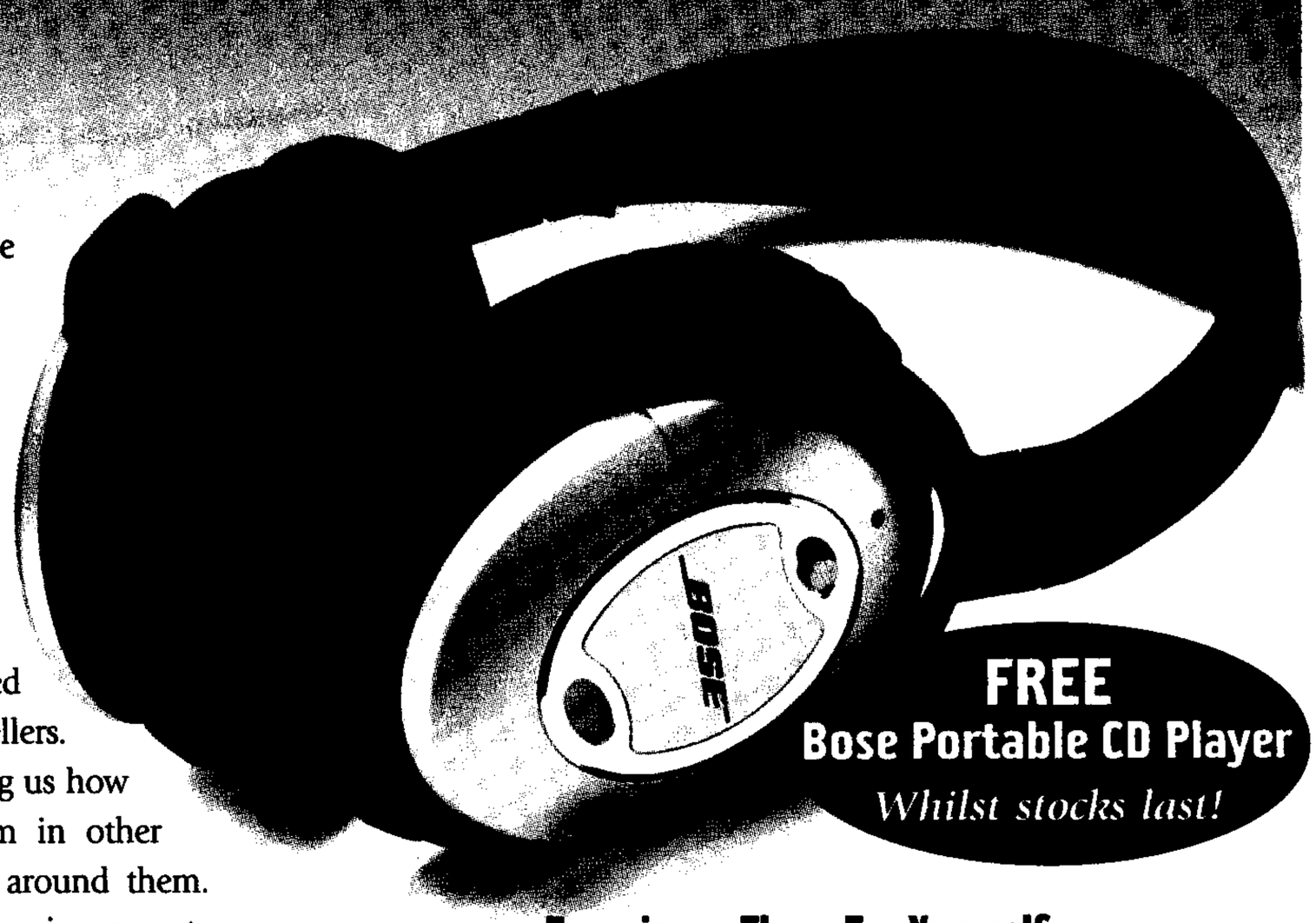

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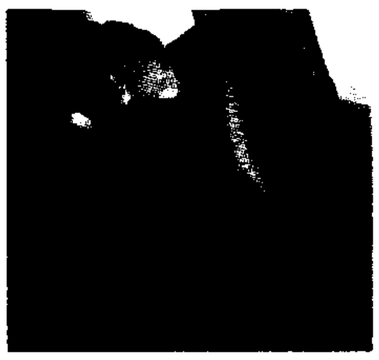
Our Best Sound Ever.

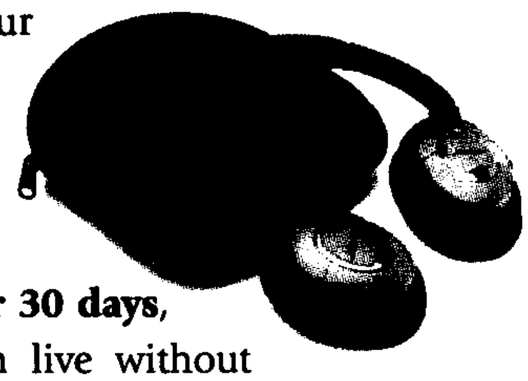


QuietComfort® 2 headphones deliver the best audio performance we have ever developed for headphones. Highs are impressively crisp and clean. Lows are deep and enveloping. Vocals are reproduced with lifelike authenticity. *Exclusive Homes* says the "Audio quality is superb. As ... exterior noise is reduced, clarity of the music or speech you are listening to is massively enhanced." Whether you are looking for noise reduction, high quality audio performance or comfortable fit, our QuietComfort® 2 headphones give you an unbeatable combination.

Enhanced Comfort And Portability.

"5-star rating" says *Stuff* magazine. *TravelPlus* describes these headphones as "incredibly comfortable, too, creating a sense of personal space." To enjoy peace and tranquillity, simply turn them on. To add Bose quality sound, attach the included audio cable and connect them to a home stereo, laptop computer, portable CD/DVD/MP3 player, iPod® or in-flight audio system. When you are done, our convenient fold-flat design allows for easy storage in the slim carrying case.

Experience Them For Yourself.



We don't expect you to take our word for how dramatically our headphones reduce noise, how clean and full the music sounds or how comfortably they fit. So we invite you to **try them risk-free for 30 days**, satisfaction guaranteed. If you can live without them, return them for a full refund. It's that simple. Call FREE now and ask about **FREE UK delivery** and our **easy interest-free payment plans** which let you make 4 equal payments over a period of up to 10 months with no interest charges from Bose.* When you call ask how you can receive a **FREE Bose Portable CD Player** with skip protection (worth £40). Experience the QuietComfort® 2 headphones for yourself and discover the kind of performance that has made Bose one of the most respected names in sound and the UK's No.1 cool technology brand.

☎ Call FREE on
0800 085 85 72
for further information quoting reference 6076

Or ✉ Text 'Premium6' to 84118
Or visit: www.bose.co.uk/6076

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Better sound through research

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*Instalment payment plan is available on credit/debit cards only and subject to status. Initial payment for either the monthly or quarterly plan is due at time of order and all payments will be charged to your credit/debit card. The 4 monthly payments must be completed within 4 months. The 4 quarterly payments must be completed within 10 months and after the initial payment, subsequent payments must be made every 3 months. There will be no interest charges from Bose. In the event of late payment, credit/debit card company interest charges may apply. Payment plan, free delivery and free CD player offer not to be combined with any other offer or applied to previous purchases. Delivery subject to product availability. Price and/or payment plan subject to change without notice. Risk-free refers to 30 day trial only. ©2005 Bose Corporation. All rights reserved. Bose was voted Cool Brandleaders and No 1 cool technology brand in the 2005 Superbrands survey. Quotes reprinted with permission from: *Condé Nast Traveller*, 06/05; *Exclusive Homes*, 10/03; *Stuff*, 1/04; *TravelPlus*, 11/03.